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# THEOLOGY OF THE CROSSROADS IN CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICA

Missiology in Mainline Protestantism: 1969-1974

door

O.E. COSTAS

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## PREFACE

This book is very much a product "of the road." The initial plan was born in San José de la Montaña, Costa Rica in December, 1973. It was revised in many respects as a result of a fact-finding trip around the world which my colleague, Alberto Barrientos, and I undertook on behalf of the Institute of In-depth Evangelism (INDEPTH) in January and February, 1974. It was continued during my last months of residence in Costa Rica (March-June 1974) and the in-between travel to theological consultations and staff meetings in Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala and Mexico. It includes insights gained during a preaching tour in Spanish-speaking USA (June 1974), participation at the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland (July 17-25, 1974) and at the Bi-annual Congress of the International Association of Mission Studies in Frankfurt, Federal Republic of Germany (July 31 – August 2, 1974).

The major part of the research and writing was done during my year of residence in Amsterdam (August, 1974 – July 1975), with several "field trips" in between (to Costa Rica and Mexico, Switzerland, Portugal, England, West Germany and Italy), where I was able to collect and collate important information. I worked on it further while on a family vacation in Spain (the land of one third of my ancestors – the other two thirds having come from Africa and Amerindia). And it was completed in "merry old" England during the first part of my two-term tenure as the William Paton Fellow, at Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham.

This is a study born from personal missionary experience and concern. It is not a mere academic exercise. It has grown out of the heat and sweat of my labor as an Evangelical, Mainline-Protestant (Baptist and Congregational missionary) from the Hispanic Caribbean, serving in the Latin American mainland with an Evangelical para-ecclesiastical organizational complex (INDEPTH and its sister entities in the Latin American Community of Evangelical Ministries).

It covers my first period of service (1969-74) and focuses on a process, of which I have been part, in the hope of making a positive contribution to Latin American Protestant Christianity and its participation in the mission of God in this convulsed continent.

Perhaps the greatest drawback of this effort is the fact that it has had to be mediated through a foreign language, and, especially, one which in Latin America stands as a symbol of neo-colonialism. As paradoxical as this may seem, the very fact that it was done in a "proximate language" rather than in a totally foreign one, as Dutch would be for me, is in itself a sign of liberation from the linguistic provincialism and imperialism which has often characterized the educational patterns into which many theologians from Africa, Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean have been forced to fit when pursuing advanced studies in North America or Western Europe.

In the course of this study I have been confronted with the challenge of overcoming the "male chauvinism" that is too often present in the Spanish language areas as a whole and among Latin American theologians in particular. Robert McAfee Brown is right in stating that "Latin American theologians, with all their merits, are still sexist . . ." <sup>1</sup> This *machismo* is made all the more evident when our works are translated or when we have to use a language such as English, in which there is (especially in North American English) a growing consciousness of sexism. Though I have continued to use, following the biblical tradition, the male pronouns when referring to the god-head, I have tried to overcome the "he and him" language when making specific references to *man* (in the plural) by its "she and her" counterpart. This sexist pattern is so basic to my background, however, that I would not be surprised to discover, once the book comes off the press, that it had crept in here and there!

I should further clarify — in connection with the language issue — the way I have chosen to spell certain terms. Rather than spelling the word "church" with a capital when using it in a universal or theological sense, I have chosen to spell it with a small c. I have used, in turn, the capital-C spelling when referring to a particular church. I have followed the same principle when making specific noun designations, such as the Continent, the Conference, the Commission, and so forth. Finally, I have chosen (again, following the biblical example) not to capitalize personal pronouns that refer to the god-head.

A special word of gratitude is in order to my promotor, Prof. Dr.

J. Verkuyl, and his assistant, Drs. J. D. Gort, for their help, stimulation and encouragement. From the moment I met Prof. Verkuyl, I have been inspired by his commitment to Jesus Christ, his courageous witness in Indonesia and the Netherlands, his evangelical warmth, prophetic insight, ecumenical outlook and dedication to a witness-in-six-continent missiology. This impression has been reinforced and deepened in the course of my studies. Indeed, he has not only proven to be a very wise teacher, but an understanding pastor and friend. Above all things, I am grateful for his marvelous spirit of collegiality. This is why I consider this work a witness to the kind of academic relationship that could and should develop between Western European or North American theologians and their counterparts in the Third World who need to pursue advanced studies outside of their geographical and cultural regions: a non-paternalistic relationship, full of mutual respect and academic freedom.

For his part, Drs. Gort has not only provided an immeasurable amount of editorial help, but also many valuable insights which have helped to strengthen the overall argument. Given my limited knowledge of the Dutch language, he has served as an effective go-between in my relationship with the University, interpreting the general policies of the University and pinpointing numerous administrative details about my course of study. My family and I are particularly thankful for the friendship and hospitality shown to us by the Gort family during our year of residence in Amsterdam.

I would also like to express my most sincere appreciation to Prof. Dr. P.H.J.M. Camps, of the Catholic University of Nijmegen, for his willingness to serve as co-referent for this dissertation. It has been my privilege to work with Prof. Camps in the Executive Committee of the International Association of Mission Studies. In this capacity I have come to know him as a warm personal friend and colleague, an excellent scholar and a committed Catholic with a wide ecumenical perspective. His knowledge of the Spanish and Portuguese languages, his understanding of the Iberian Missionary Movement and his appreciation of emerging Third World theologies have been a source of personal strength and inspiration.

Warm thanks are also due to Cand. Theol. H. J. Westmaas, Mr. Tj. de Boer and Mr. P. J. van Vliet for the great amount of time and effort they expended in correcting the various printer's proofs; Tj. de Boer also did much in terms of coordinating contacts with the publisher; I would like to direct a special word of gratitude to P. van

Vliet for the time and effort he put into the fine *Register of Names*, which can only enhance whatever value this dissertation may have.

The study project represented herein was made possible through the vision and generosity of the Latin American Evangelical Center for Pastoral Studies (CELEP) and its sponsoring body, INDEPTH, as well as the Latin American Mission and its supporting churches and friends, who granted me a study leave. The Theological Education Fund, in its desire to help advance the teaching staff of theological schools and study centers in the Third World, extended a grant to CELEP to cover the travel cost for my family and me, while the Reformed Church of the Netherlands made a generous grant from the "Come Over the Bridge Campaign Fund" to help us meet the high cost of living. This same church, in partnership with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Reformed Mission League, helped to subsidize the cost of publication. I am hard pressed to find adequate words to express to all of them my profound gratitude for their love and trust. I pray that the end product of my labour may have made their support worthwhile.

Finally, I want to acknowledge my debt to the colleagues, friends and institutions who further contributed in one way or another to making this work possible. It would be impossible to mention everyone. I shall have to limit myself, therefore, to those to whom I owe the most:

My wife, Rosa Feliciano Costas, who not only typed the manuscript several times, but worked tirelessly day and night as assistant researcher, "sounding board," counselor and friend.

My daughters, Annette Michelle and Dannette Gisele, who not only tolerated the frequent grumpiness of their father caused by the many long hours spent in a project whose nature and object they could not yet understand or appreciate; who also gave my wife and me a tremendous lesson on cultural adaptability, becoming our "eyes and ears" in terms of Dutch life and culture.

The staff and Board of Directors of INDEPTH and the Administrative Commission of CELEP for their empathetic support and encouragement, and to all the colleagues in the San José office who faithfully and promptly forwarded numerous books, periodicals and non-published documents needed for my research.

The Faculty and Student body of the Latin American Biblical Seminary in San José for their theological stimulation during the



four years I served there as professor of communication and missiology.

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Finally, I would like to address a word of sincere appreciation to the publishers, Editions Rodopi of Amsterdam; in particular I would like to thank Mr. P. Schippers, his son Mr. F. van der Zee and their colleagues for their unfailing kindness, cooperation and hospitality, and especially for the amazing speed and efficiency with which they saw this volume through printing and press.

To all of them a sincere thanks. And to all those who may read these pages, the acknowledgment of my personal and sole responsibility for the handling of the research material and the conclusions reached.

Orlando E. Costas  
Selly Oak, Birmingham

## ABBREVIATIONS

AADET	Asociación Andina de Escuelas Teológicas (Andean Association of Theological Schools)
ACORDE	Asociación Coordinadora de Recursos Evangélicos (Association for the Coordination of Protestant Resources)
AGAPE	Presbyterian Social Action Group in Guatemala
ALET	Asociación Latinoamericana de Escuelas Teológicas, Región Norte (Latin American Association of Theological Schools, Northern Region)
ALISTE	Asociación Latinoamericana de Institutos y Seminarios Teológicos por Extensión (Latin American Association of Theological Seminaries and Institutes by Extension)
ASIT	Asociación Sudamericana de Instituciones Teológicas (South American Association of Theological Institutions)
ASTE	Associação de Seminários Teológicos Evangélicos (Association of Protestant Theological Schools, Brazil)
BANGKOK	Eighth Conference on World Mission, Bangkok, Thailand, 1973
CAL	Vatican's Commission for Latin America
CAMEO	Committee to Assist Missionary Education Overseas
CCLA	Comité de Cooperación Latinoamericana (Latin American Cooperation Committee)
CCPAL	Comisión de Cooperación Presbiteriana en América Latina (Commission for Presbyterian Cooperation in Latin America)
CDM/DC	Christian Democratic Movement; Democracia Cristiana
CEDEN	Comité Evangélico de Desarrollo y Emergencia Nacional (National Protestant Development and Emergency Committee, Honduras)

CEI	Centro Ecuménico de Informação (Ecumenical Information Center, Brazil)
CELA	Conferencia Evangélica Latinoamericana (Latin American Protestant Conference)
CELADEC	Comisión Evangélica Latinoamericana de Educación Cristiana (Latin American Protestant Commission of Christian Education)
CELAM	Conferencia Episcopal Latinoamericana (Latin American Episcopal Conference)
CELAP	Comisión Ecuménica Latinoamericana de Proyectos; known also as CELA (Latin American Ecumenical Project Commission)
CELEP	Centro Evangélico Latinoamericano de Estudios Pastora- les (Latin American Evangelical Center for Pastoral Studies)
CEPAD	Comité Evangélico para Ayuda al Desarrollo (Protestant Commission for Development Aid, Nicara- gua)
CEPAL	Comisión Económica para América Central (Latin American Economic Commission, UN)
CESE	(Coordenadoria Ecuménica de Serviço (Ecumenical Service Commission, Brazil)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CICARWS	Commission for Inter-Church Aid, Refugees and World Service, WCC
CIDOC	Centro Intercultural de Documentación (Intercultural Documentation Center, Cuernavaca, México)
CLADE-USA:	Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización en EE.UU. (Latin American Congress on Evangelization in the USA)
CLADE	Primer Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización (First Latin American Congress on Evangelization, November, 1969)
CLAME	Comunidad Latinoamericana de Ministerios Evangélicos (Latin American Community of Evangelical Ministries)
CLAR	Conferencia Latinoamericana de Religiosos (Latin American Conference of Religious)

CNBB	Conferencia Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (National Conference of Brazilian Bishops)
COPEY	Venezuelan Christian Democratic Party
CWME	Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, WCC
CWS	Church World Service
DEC	Departamento de Educación del CELAM (Department of Education of CELAM)
DMC	Departamento de Misiones del CELAM (Department of Missions of CELAM)
ECBLC	Evangelical Church in Brazil of the Lutheran Conference
EFMA	Evangelical Foreign Missions Association, USA
EMCP	Evangelical Methodist Church in Panamá
FUMEC	Federación Universitaria de Movimientos Estudiantiles Cristianos (University Federation of Christian Student Movements)
ICOWE	International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland
IDOC	International Documentation on the Contemporary Church and International Documentation and Communication Center
IEMB/EMBC	Iglesia Evangélica Metodista en Bolivia (Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia)
IEMU	Iglesia Evangélica Metodista en Uruguay (Evangelical Methodist Church in Uruguay)
IFMA	Independent Foreign Missions Association, USA
INDEPTH	Institute of In-Depth Evangelism (Instituto de Evangelización a Fondo)
IPLA	Instituto Pastoral Latinoamericano (Latin American Pastoral Institute, Quito, Ecuador)
IRM	<i>International Review of Mission</i>
ISAL	Movimiento de Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina (Church and Society Movement in Latin America)
ISEDET	Instituto Superior Evangélico de Educación Teológica (Protestant Institute of Higher Theological Education, Argentina)
LAD	Latin American Desk, CICARWS
MAPU	Movimiento de Acción Popular Unida (Movement of United Popular Action, Chile)
MEDELLÍN	Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops

MÉXICO	Seventh Conference on World Mission, México City, 1963
NAIROBI	Vth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, Kenya
NLCC	Curso Nueva Vida en Cristo (New Life in Christ Course, CELADEC)
NT	New Testament
ONIS	Oficina Nacional de Información Social (National Office of Social Information, Perú)
OT	Old Testament
PCR	Program to Combat Racism, WCC
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
SBL	Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano (Latin American Biblical Seminary, Costa Rica)
SEP	Servicio Evangélico de Prensa (Protestant Press Service, Argentina)
SEPR	Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico (Union Seminary of Puerto Rico)
SODEPAX	Society for Development and Peace (WCC/RCC)
TEE	Theological Education by Extension
TEF	Theological Education Fund (CWME, WCC)
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
ULAJE	Unión Latinoamericana de Juventudes Ecuménicas (Ecumenical Union of Latin American Youth)
UN	United Nations
UNELAM	Movimiento Latinoamericano Pro-Unidad Evangélica (Latin American Movement for Protestant Unity)
UPPSALA	IVth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Uppsala, Sweden
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCCE	World Council of Christian Education

## **PART ONE**

### **THE CONCEPTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK**

## CHAPTER I

### MISSIOLOGY: THEOLOGY AT THE CROSSROADS

#### MISSION AND MISSIOLOGY

It is a generally accepted fact that one of the most outstanding contributions of the biblical theology movement of the late 30's, 40's and 50's to missiology was its rediscovery of the centrality of mission in the life of the church.<sup>1</sup> As the community of those who respond in faith to God's grace in Christ made present by the Holy Spirit, the church is both a centripetal and a centrifugal reality. She is a product and an instrument of mission. In Christ, she has been called "out of darkness" into God's "marvelous light" to "declare" his "wonderful deeds" to the world ( I P. 2:9).

#### *Mission as Intrinsic to the Life of the Church; Missiology as the Handmaid of Mission*

Mission is intrinsic to the very life of the church. There is no other church than a missionary church. To be the church is, therefore, to live in a crossroads situation; to be constantly encountering the world; to be challenged by it and to be impelled by the Spirit of Christ to witness in and to it of "the gospel of the kingdom of God" (Mk. 1:14).<sup>2</sup>

This does not mean, however, that the whole church expresses its missionary character in the same way. Being scattered all over the world in different communities, affected by their socio-economic-politico-cultural environment, it is natural to expect different forms of

1. For a summary of the major contributions of the biblical theology movement of this period to missiology, see Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

2. Cf. Bengt Sundkler, *The World of Mission*, trans. by Eric J. Sharpe (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965); Peter Beyerhaus and Carl F. Hallencreutz, ed., *The Church Crossing Frontiers: Essays on the Nature of Mission in Honour of Bengt Sundkler* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1969).



missionary obedience from the churches. Moreover, not always are the churches faithful to their calling. Indeed, in the history of the churches the call to mission has often appeared in the form of a prophetic reminder of unfaithfulness and stagnation. Other times, it has appeared as a prophetic challenge, fruit of a new insight that paves the way towards new forms of obedience.

Thus the relevance of missiology. It helps the church in her multiple manifestations in the world to take notice of her life in mission, critically analyzing her performance, questioning her notions and perspectives and pulling her forward into new ventures. Missiology is the handmaid of mission, but mission is not always missiological. Mission becomes missiological when it is accompanied by a process of critical reflection.

*Mission as Participation in God's Mission; Missiology as Reflection in Praxis*

This means that missiology is fundamentally a praxeological phenomenon. It is a critical reflection that takes place in the praxis of mission. It is not a reflection that arises as a result of nor in preparation for mission, as a mere analytical and evaluative task or as a set of principles to be applied in specific situations. It is rather a reflection that takes place in the concrete missionary situation, as part of the church's missionary obedience to and participation in God's mission, and is itself actualized in that situation.

God's mission is the unfolding of his redemptive purpose in Christ. Its object is always the world — man's world, or men and women in their multiple life situations. It finds them wherever they are and deals with all of their concerns and problems from the specific perspective of the comprehensive reality which the gospel announces, namely, the arrival of a new age, characterized by a historical project whose goal is nothing less than the formation of a *new man* and the creation of new heavens and a new earth. This message is actualized through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the witness of the church.

It is in reference to this witnessing action saturated and led by the sovereign, redemptive action of the Holy Spirit that the concept of missionary praxis is used. Missiology arises as part of a witnessing engagement to the gospel in the multiple situations of life. It is not concerned with just any kind of praxis but with that which revolves around the communication of the gospel.

Communication, however, is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. It involves words and deeds, concepts, attitudes and experiences, stimuli, reactions, replies and behavior. It takes place at many levels in multiple forms.

*Mission as a Comprehensive Process; Missiology as a Contextual Reflection*

Since God's redemptive mission is oriented toward men and women in their multiple life situations, the communication of the gospel needs to be a social yet personal event. It needs to be addressed to mankind as a whole, in the totality of its historical situation, and to men and women as particular historical beings; *i.e.*, as persons. This means: communication to all of society and to each one of its members.

This leads to a comprehensive yet specific understanding of the missionary praxis of the church. The whole life of the church is caught up in mission. Whatever she does is related to the communication of the gospel. Her very life constitutes the context, point of gravitation and verification of her missionary praxis.

Mission takes place in the midst of the forces of history: ideologies, political and economic systems, social and religious movements. The confrontation between these forces constitute the *external* context of mission. To be congruent with its historical character, mission must involve a critical solidarity with society at the level of its tensions and conflicts, uncertainties and hopes, failures and achievements.

Mission has not only an external, but an *internal* context. It is not only concerned with the forces of history, but with the internal dynamics of the church: her organic development, growth in the faith and suffering service in and for the world. In this sense, missiology implies a critical reflection on the process of leadership formation, the indigeneity and relevance of worship, the quality of Christian stewardship, the church's self-understanding and maturity of faith and her mode of being in the world.

*Mission as a Specific Moment; Missiology as Reflection on a Frontier-Crossing Event*

There is, nevertheless, a specificity to mission which makes it unique and different from all of its accompanying parts. Just as in communication there is a moment when the message penetrates

through the personalities of the sender-receiver, cutting across the channel and overcoming the external and internal barriers, striking the nerve cord of the receiver and provoking a response, so in mission there is a moment when the gospel breaks through and crosses the innermost boundaries of the world and provokes a response to the new reality that it announces. Thus, while mission is a comprehensive event in which the total life of the church, as a human yet divine community, is dynamically interacting with the world in a concrete historical situation, is a specifically unique moment in which the gospel crosses the personal, spiritual frontiers of the world and provokes a response.

To be sure, not always is there an *overt* response. Not always is there an *immediate* response. People respond at different levels, through different ways and in different time-spans. But as the O.T. says, the word of the Lord does not return to him empty (Is. 55:11). Indeed, it not only demands, but provokes and guarantees a response, be it positive or negative.

Missiology considers these different responses, helping the church to identify and understand their significance. Moreover, it analyzes the different forms that mission takes, correcting, improving them and stimulating the emergence of new ones. Above all, it asks whether the wholeness of the gospel is being faithfully communicated in the world; whether the comprehensive reality that it announces is being incarnated by the church; and whether it is permeating all levels of human society.

### *The Praxis of Mission and the Critical Function of Missiology*

This is why missiology is defined as a critical reflection in the praxis of mission. By "reflection" is meant serious analytical interpretation, evaluation and projection. It is not a mere descriptive intellectual exercise. It is rather a serious attempt to understand analytically, and therefore, interpret and translate phenomena in terms relevant to the reflector's categories, culture and life situation. More than this, it involves a responsible, conscious value judgment of that which is analytically interpreted and a reinforced, modified or an entirely new projected course of action.

Reflection in praxis takes, therefore, a critical function. That is, it probes, interpretes, searches and proposes. On the one hand, it proposes a course of action grounded on a double criteria: a historical "past" and a historical "now." The former involves a past

event (the gospel) with a normative interpretation (Scripture) handed down from generation to generation (tradition) by a community with a miraculous experience (the church). The historical "now" involves the concrete missionary context; the crossroads in the midst of which the gospel is experienced, lived and communicated. On the other hand, missiology interprets and questions the past and the now of faith,<sup>3</sup> searching for and projecting itself toward the future in order to correct, strengthen, sustain or totally change the church's missionary performance.

To define missiology as a critical reflection in missionary praxis is to affirm that it arises out of the missionary situation, but not merely as a post facto exercise. It is also to negate the notion of a spontaneous missionary praxis, divorced from the process of critical reflection. It is rather to affirm that the missionary action of the church is the result of the new reality that has broken through in Jesus Christ, a reality interpreted in the Bible and witnessed by the church in her miraculous experience as the universal community of the Holy Spirit. It is further to underscore both the fundamental relationship between the church's awareness of her concrete historical context and her missionary praxis as well as the importance of being attentive to the corrective of "that great cloud of witnesses"

3. This means that hermeneutics is of fundamental importance for missiology. Indeed, insofar as missiology deals with the way the gospel is *trans-mitted*, it is inevitably linked with the task of hermeneutics. Accordingly, missiology needs to study critically the past of the faith, its content and context, so as to understand the way it originated, has been interpreted and handed down. Moreover, it needs to be critically aware of the dynamics of the now of history, since the present understanding and communication of the faith are also conditioned by the political, economic, social, cultural and religious crossroads of life. If, as H. M. Kuitert has said, "Mission is . . . the genesis of all theology," hermeneutics is then the genesis of all missiology. H. M. Kuitert, *The Reality of Faith: A Way Between Protestant Orthodoxy and Existentialist Theology*, trans. by Lewis B. Smedes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 170. See also Hans-Werner Gensichen, *Glaube für die Welt: Theologische Aspekte der Mission* (Gerd Mohn: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1971), pp. 51-54. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Interpretación de la fe: Aportaciones a una teología hermenéutica y crítica*, trans. from the German edition, with the author's revision and approval, by José M. Mauteón (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1973); José Míguez-Bonino, "Hermeneutics, Truth and Praxis," in *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 86-105; Severino Croatto, *Liberación y libertad: Pautas hermenéuticas* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Mundo Nuevo, 1973).

which has preceded her in mission. It is, finally, to emphasize the relativity of the church's missionary praxis, the fact that it stands always under the judgment of the Word of God and the world (for therein God's Spirit is also present guiding and rebuking the church) and needs, therefore, to reflect constantly on the meaning of the gospel and be open to the future.

### MISSIOLOGY AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

It is within the framework of the above definition, or as the title expresses it, a theology of the crossroads, that this work will be undertaken. For the serious student of mission in Europe and North America, such a perspective may seem, at first sight, to be a departure from the traditional understanding of this field of study. Especially since the days of Gustav Warneck,<sup>4</sup> missiology has been considered a discipline within the theological encyclopedia.<sup>5</sup> However, a brief reference to several definitions of missiology from this area will show that the concept herein proposed lies rather close to the traditional understanding of academic missiology.<sup>6</sup>

4. Warneck is recognized as the founder of modern missiology. Although he was not the first to deal systematically with the phenomenon of mission, he is credited, by Catholics and Protestants, as being the first to produce a formal systematic analysis of this field and to give "the first impulse toward a scientific missionary discipline." Angel Santos-Hernández, S.J., *Misionología: Problemas introductorios y ciencias auxiliares* (Santander: Editorial "Sal Terrae," 1964), p. 100ff. See also, among others, W. Holsten, "Warneck, Gustav (1834-1910)," in *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission*, Stephen Neill, Gerald H. Anderson and John Goodwin, eds. (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 643f.; and Warneck's own work, *Evangelische Missionslehre*, Vols. I-V (1892-1903).

5. Cf. O. G. Myklebust, *The Study of Missions in Theological Education*, Vol. I (Oslo: Egede Instituttet, 1955), p. 285f., recognized as a classical study on this matter.

6. In fact, recent research has shown how such an understanding of the study of mission can be traced as far back as the 16th and 17th centuries. Cf. Enrique Dussel, *Historia de la iglesia en América Latina: Colonización y liberación 1492-1792* (Barcelona: Editorial Nova Terra, 1972), pp. 54-99; *Idem*, *El episcopado hispanoamericano; institución misionera en defensa del indio: 1504-1620*, III Tomos (Cuernavaca: CIDOC SONDEOS, 1970-1972); Fr. Rousseau, *L'idée missionnaire aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles: Les méthodes, les conceptions d'organisation* (Paris, 1973); B. Biermann, *Las Casas und seine Sendung: Das Evangelium und die Rechte des Menschen* (Mainz, 1968); J. Specker, *Die Missionsmethode in Spanish Amerika im 16e Jahrhundert mit Besonderer Be-*

### *Contemporary Euro-North American Concepts of Missiology*

Angel Santos Hernández, a Spanish Jesuit missiologist, has defined missiology as a historical-theological discipline.<sup>7</sup> It is a specialized field within both the disciplines of dogmatics and general church history, "unified by the same and sole specific object of the 'mission'."<sup>8</sup> It is not an autonomous science because it does not have its own formal object. But given the fact that it studies in its own special mode, and apart from theology and history as such, the formal aspect of mission, and given the fact that it focuses all of its subject matter from the missionary perspective, it has an "accidental unity" which makes it "a scientific specialization" without being itself an autonomous science.<sup>9</sup> Missiology

studies the problem of mission in a specialized way and its own subject matter forms a homogeneous whole, sufficiently broad, complex and im-

*rücksichtigung der Konzilien und Synoden* (Beckenried, 1953). See also Francisco de Vitoria, *De Indis; De Jure bellis Hispanorum in barbaros* (Salamanca, 1539); *Idem, De Indis et De Jure Bellis Selectionis*, Ernest Nys, ed. (Washington: Carnegie, 1917); J. de Acosta, *De procuranda indorum salute* (Salamanca 1588); Tomás de Jesús, *De procuranda salute omnium gentium* (Antuerpiae, 1613); L. Lopetegui, *El Padre José de Acosta, S.I. y las misiones* (Madrid, 1943); R. Hoffman, *Pioneer Theories of Missiology* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1960).

7. For another European Catholic approach to missiology, see Karl Rahner, "Grundprinzipien der heutigen Mission der Kirche" in *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie*, Band II/2 (Freiburg, 1966), pp. 46-80. See also A. Camps, "Missiologie in deze tijd," *Wereld en Zending*, No. 1 (Jrg. 1, 1972), 5ff., who comments upon Rahner's concept of mission and follows it in his treatment of contemporary missiology. According to Camps, "missiology is the reflection on the self realization of the essence of Christianity in a situation in which a deep encounter with it has not yet taken place." (*Ibid.*, p. 7). It is a scientific task on and geared toward the praxis of faith in those concrete situations where it has not had a deep ongoing confrontation with other faiths (p. 8).

Such an approach, while having a distinctive formulation that differentiates it from the four to be discussed in the main text of this chapter, does have its convergence with them in at least three points. (1) Like the others, it defines missiology as a scientific task. (2) It focuses on the crossing of religious frontiers. (3) It is based upon and is directed to the missionary praxis of the faith. At the same time, it makes explicit one matter that is not necessarily emphasized in the others: the emphasis on mission as the self-realization of the church, a perspective with which neither J. Verkuyl, D. Bosch, and perhaps A. Tippet, would accept.

8. Santos-Hernández, *Misionología*, p. 225.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 237, 238.

portant. It comprises several sciences, but respects fully the scientific demands of each of them. Sometimes it will be history, other times theology; but the important thing is that it studies in each of them the missionary aspect in detail.<sup>10</sup>

The fact that missiology is conceived as a historico-theological discipline, does not mean that it is only historical and theological in scope. According to Santos-Hernández, there are other autonomous sciences which have their point of contact with the missionary problem, such as ethnology, history of religions and linguistics,<sup>11</sup> and which provide an auxiliary function to missiology. Their interaction with missiology is twofold: they contribute to the scientific study of the Christian mission and they benefit from it. Accordingly, missiology is conceived by him as a specialized historico-theological study which focuses on the missionary enterprise in dialogue with cognate sciences.

For the Dutch Reformed missiologist, *Johannes Verkuyl*, missiology is

that academic discipline which includes both systematic investigation of the *missio Dei* and critical reflection upon the various forms of human participation in that mission, *i.e.*, upon both past and present embodiments of the *missiones ecclesiarum* and, in the broader sense, the *missio hominum*. A large part of the task of missiology is to engage in a continuous scholarly and critical examination of the presuppositions, motives, methods, structures, relationships and policies of these *missiones ecclesiarum* and the *missio hominum* in the various situations of the contemporary world in which they were or are being carried out. In so doing, this discipline must direct its particular attention to, among other things, those bottlenecks, problems and challenges which took or have taken on urgency in the contemporary exercise of the missionary task, and at the same time address itself to future developments.<sup>12</sup>

This definition puts the accent on the theological character of missiology. As Verkuyl himself asserts: "in this definition I have

10. *Ibid.*

11. Santos-Hernández also mentions "coloniastics" which I have omitted from the above list on the ground that it has passed its age. (The author wrote this work in 1961).

12. J. Verkuyl, *Hoofdstukken uit de Prolegomena van de Missiologie* (Amsterdam: Department of Mission and Evangelism, Faculty of Theology of the Free (Reformed) University, 1971), p. 7. See also his *Inleiding in de nieuwere zendings-wetenschap* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1975), pp. 17ff.

tried to underline the fact that missiology is a thoroughly theological discipline."<sup>13</sup> As can be seen, however, this perspective does not exclude the historical dimension nor interaction with related sciences. On the contrary, the fact that missiology studies scholarly and critically "the presuppositions, motives, methods, structures, relationships and policies of . . . these *missiones ecclesiarum* and the *missio hominum*" makes it a very specialized theological discipline, integrating the biblical, dogmatic, ethical, historical and practical dimensions of theology with other fields of study in a critico-scientific reflection on God's mission as expressed in the missionary obedience of the churches *and* in man's obedience to his own mission as a creature of God. This makes missiology not only a complementary discipline of the theological encyclopedia but a necessary tool of the missionary enterprise. Missiology, he adds,

may not become a substitute for action and participation. God seeks participants and volunteers for his missions. And one of the tasks of missiology is involvement in the stimulation, training and equipping of such participants and volunteers. If the doing of missiology does not lead to participation here and now, or there and now, it has missed its humble goal.<sup>14</sup>

This concept is also shared by *David Bosch*. Of course, Bosch does not necessarily belong to the Euro-North American missiological tradition. Being a South African of European stock, trained in Europe but reflecting missiologically in the context of the contemporary South African scene, he stands as a bridge between the North Atlantic and Africa. But the fact that he is a missiologist of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa (a European-type church), the holder of a missiological chair (a rare case outside of North America and Western Europe) in an European-style university and a writer in close interaction with North American and Western European missiologists justifies his treatment within this tradition.

For Bosch,<sup>15</sup> missiology is defined as theological reflection on the missionary activity of the church, or as "the theology of the church crossing frontiers." Missiology is thus a specialized form of theological reflection. It addresses theology by reminding it constantly of the number and varieties of frontiers which the

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

15. Cf. David J. Bosch, "Missiological Developments in South Africa," *Misionalia*, 3:1 (April, 1975), 11ff.



Christian faith must cross in order to meet the demands of its missionary dimension. It also addresses the church by engaging in and reflecting upon her missionary obedience. It thus has a *descriptive* as well as a *normative* function. "This means: it critically *describes* what the church has been doing in connection with specific issues, and it provides the *norms* for future action."<sup>16</sup> In order to fulfill this task, missiology must relate those specific issues to the Christian faith. This makes missiology "the 'meeting point' between theology and the science of development and . . . cultural anthropology, or the science of religion, and so on – depending on the issues at stake."<sup>17</sup>

Closely linked to the three missiologists mentioned is the view of the Australian-born church-growth missiologist, *Alan R. Tippett*. Tippett's view is representative of the thinking of the faculty and missionary associates of the Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission and its related entities, the Institute of Church Growth, the William Carey Institute for Christian Mission and Church Growth and the Summer Institute of International Studies. It is similar to the other three in that it stands within the traditional concept of missiology as an academic discipline which relates to theology, history and the social sciences. It deviates from the others in that it sees missiology as a discipline which is "historical but is not history, anthropological but not anthropology, theological but not theology."<sup>18</sup>

Missiology, says Tippett, is an interdisciplinary field of study, "with a vocabulary of its own that somehow needs to be related to the theory and research of each of the related disciplines." He thus defines it as:

... the academic discipline or science which researches, records and applies data relating to the biblical origin, the history (including the use of documentary materials), the anthropological principles and techniques and the theological base of the Christian mission. The theory, methodology and data bank are particularly directed towards

1. the processes by which the Christian message is communicated,
2. the encounters brought about by its proclamation to non-Christians,

16. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Alan R. Tippett, "Missiology, A New Discipline," in Alvin Martin, ed., *The Means of World Evangelization: Missiological Education at the Fuller School of World Mission* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1974), p. 27.

3. the planting of the Church and organization of congregations, and the growth and relevance of their structures and fellowship, internally to maturity, externally in outreach as the Body of Christ in local situations and beyond, in a variety of culture patterns.

Immediately it will be apparent that such research requires some familiarity which the tools and techniques of anthropology, theology and history. Yet even this is not all. The missiologist may find himself calling on the resources of, say, linguistics or psychology. Nevertheless, missiology is a discipline in its own rights. It is not a mere borrower from other fields, for these dimensions are related to each other in a unique manner. They interact, influence, modify each other. Missiology is dynamic not static. It is not like a physical mixture but is more like a field of chemical interaction, combination and recombination, producing new substances by what I believe is called 'the transmutation of elements,' or in biology, the coming together of germ cells to form some completely new organism. Missiology is a new thing with its own autonomous entity.<sup>19</sup>

In insisting on the new and independent character of missiology, Tippetts would seem to dissociate himself from the other three who, in varying degrees, would place missiology within the theological field. It must not be forgotten, however, that Tippetts writes as a missionary anthropologist with a Wesleyan theological and South Pacific ethno-historical background. He is, therefore, interested in underlining the uniqueness of missiology, especially as an arm of world evangelization. Thus he can state: "The simplest definition of missiology is 'the study of man being brought to God in history'..."<sup>20</sup> But this brief definition puts missiology within the historico-theologico-anthropological field as a specialized, auxiliary and critical field of study because it focuses on the historical process by which men and women are brought to the *knowledge of God*, which implies the knowledge and use of auxiliary tools.

### *Convergence of These Concepts*

Thus, in spite of their different emphases, these four missiologists have similar views on the nature, place and task of missiology. They all agree that missiology is fundamentally an academic discipline. That is, missiology is not to be equated with mission; it reflects on and points toward mission, but they are not one and the same. They

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 28.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

further agree that missiology is theological but not bound to theology. It both serves and is served by theology. It has a historical dimension but is not just one more chapter of the history of the church or of mankind. It is anthropological in that it is interested in men and women, but it is not mere anthropology because it sees them in relation to the Christian faith and in the context of their multiple life situations and problems. As such, missiology interacts with other sciences, such as, for example, psychology, sociology, linguistics and political science. Above all, missiology studies the church's life in mission. Therefore, it has an ecclesiological concern which takes the form of a critical function in its evaluation of the church's obedience in the light of biblical revelation, her own historical background and the context of her missionary endeavor. This critical function is further substantiated by the fact that missiology offers suggestions both to those who hold policy-making responsibilities (mission boards and executives) as well as to those who execute these policies (missionaries) and stands on the cutting-edge of the missionary enterprise by stimulating voluntary participation therein.

It can thus be seen that while *Santos-Hernández, Verkuy, Bosch and Tippett* underscore the role of missiology as an academic discipline, they do not discard its function as a critical reflection in missionary praxis. On the contrary, they each emphasize the fundamental, intrinsic relationship between missiology and mission. Indeed, they each hold that missiology cannot exist apart from a continuous reflection on the ongoing life in mission of the church.

## MISSIOLOGY NORTH AND SOUTH

### *What the Difference is Not*

The difference between missiology in Europe and Anglo-Saxon America and in the lands south of the Rio Bravo is not necessarily that one is more or less grounded on praxis than the other. To be sure, not always has European and North American missiology been sufficiently praxeal. Very often it has been much too academic and theoretical. It is also to be expected that in Latin America, given the relative absence of missiology as an independent field of study within the theological encyclopedia, a greater emphasis would naturally have to be placed on praxis. But the real difference lies elsewhere.

*What the Difference Is: Style and Types of Questions*

It lies, first of all, in the missiological style of North and South. In the North, missiology usually appears as a carefully thought out, written reflection. In the South, it is mostly an oral, popular reflection which is done "on the road," prompted by a significant event or a specific issue. Its written form is usually mimeographed and documentary, although many of these documents and reflections on the road usually find their way into small pocket-books or pamphlets and in some cases, to full length books.

In the North, missiology is the province of specialized theologians. In the South, it is usually sparked by ordinary members of the church acting collectively and helped along by the few professional theologians who, even though they have their own general field of interest, find themselves, most of the time, having to work as general practitioners.<sup>21</sup>

This brings into focus a second difference. In Latin America, missiology has overwhelmingly appeared in connection with the issues confronting the church there, in her concrete historical situation; whereas in Europe and North America, missiology has been, generally speaking, oriented toward those who are geographically far.

To be sure, the notion of "witness in six continents" has not been without its impact. Ever since the Missionary Conference of 1963 in Mexico City and Vatican II,<sup>22</sup> there has been throughout the North Atlantic world a growing concern on the missionary situation of North America and Western Europe. Yet, from the looks of the books and articles published, one does not have to search very far to

21. For an interpretation of the role and difficulties encountered by the Latin American theologian, see the respective analyses of José Míguez-Bonino (for the Protestant) and Juan Luis Segundo (for the Catholic). These two essays, though written more than five years ago, still hold true in their main assertions. Cf. José Míguez-Bonino, "El camino del teólogo protestante latinoamericano," *Cuadernos de Marcha*, No. 29 (septiembre, 1969); Juan Luis Segundo, "Una iglesia sin teología" in his *De la sociedad a la teología* (Buenos Aires: Carlos Lohlé, 1970), pp. 11ff. For a more recent analysis of the relationship between the thinking minority and the masses in society and the church, see the latter's *Masas y minorías* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1973), 110 pp.

22. Cf. Ronald K. Orchard, ed., *Witness in Six Continents* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964); "Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church," *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbot, S.J., ed. (N.Y.: Guild Press,

be confronted with the fact that with few exceptions the missiological literature of the North is still oriented to the questions before the church "there" rather than "here."<sup>23</sup>

This is so because missiology has been linked to the institutions that have been created for the support and promotion of individual missionaries and the offspring of their labor, the church in the

1966), p. 597ff. The issue, however, had been raised in Catholic circles many years before by Godin and Daniel in their thought provoking work *France, pays de mission?* It is interesting to note that two years before the appearance of this book, a similar one, with similar theses, was published in Chile! Cf. A. Hurtado, *¿Es Chile un país católico?* (Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico, 1941).

23. This becomes evident the moment one compares the articles that are published in any number of the missiological journals and bulletins that have appeared in recent years. Cf., for example, *Wereld en Zending: Tijdschrift voor Missiologie* (Amsterdam); *Exchange: Bulletin of Third World Christian Literature* (Leiden); *Church Growth Bulletin* (Pasadena); *Missiology: An International Review* (Pasadena); *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (Wheaton).

Two obvious exceptions to these are the *International Review of Mission* (Geneva) and *Missionalia* (Pretoria). The former, especially in recent years, has sought increasingly to deal with missiological questions and issues in every continent. *Missionalia*, a recent South African journal, has published many articles that deal with African issues in general and South African missiological problems in particular. In this same line, two missiological projects, recently published, deserve to be especially noted: Clifton L. Holland, *The Religious Dimension in Hispanic Los Angeles: A Protestant Case Study* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1974); and Hakan Zetterquist, *Stad och Stift: Stiftsbildning och Forsamlingsdelningar I Stockholm 1940-1956* (City and Diocese: Diocesan Foundation and Parish Partitions in Stockholm 1940-1956) (Uppsala: "Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia XXVI," Svenska Institutet for Missionsforskning, 1974). See, in addition, Olav Guttorm Myklebust, "Kristenheden som misjonsmark ... sin egen og andres" (The Christian West as a Missionfield), *Norsk Tidsskrift for Mission* 28:3 (1974), 155-166; Synnove Hilden Kristensen, "Fremmedarbeiderne og kirken. En orientering" (Foreign Workers and the Church in Norway), *Ibid.*, 28:4, 229-234; and Ian Fraser, *The Fire Runs: God's People Participating in Change* (London: SCM, 1975).

In terms of academic structure, the Department of Mission and Evangelization of the Theological Faculty of the Free University of Amsterdam merits recognition for its concern not only on mission "there", but also for its insistence on dealing with the evangelistic challenge of contemporary Dutch and European society. Mention should also be made of the Selly Oak Colleges, whose Training in Mission program has stressed the challenge of mission at home as well as overseas.

They are all signs of a trend in the right direction: the *efficacious* concern for the praxis of mission in six continents.

countries of the non-European and Anglo-American world. And even though it is generally agreed that the latter has come, or is fast becoming, of age, these institutions have been, or are in the process of doing-so, rearranged as agencies for inter-church aid or inter-church cooperation.<sup>24</sup> In this context, the missiologist is called upon to be the theological advisor of the missionary or inter-church aid agency and the foreign-affairs specialist of the theological faculty. At the same time, he or she interprets to the church at home what is taking place in the church overseas, serving as a bridge between the two. However, again with a few exceptions, he or she spends little time dealing with the concrete missiological issues before the church of which he or she is part.

Since for historico-cultural and financial reasons Latin American Christians have not been able to participate, until recently, in the missionary enterprise outside of their geographical frontier,<sup>25</sup> their

24. In the Protestant world, there are at least two exceptions to this trend. (1) The case of the evangelical faith missions which seem still to be going strong, albeit with emerging signs of trouble at the level of the relationship with national churches and organizations. (For a critical analysis of the problems and references to recent literature, see my *The Church and Its Mission* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1974), pp. 153ff. Cf. J. Allen Thompson, "Formula for Church/Mission Relationships" in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: A Comprehensive Reference Volume on World Evangelization*, J. D. Douglas, ed. (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), pp. 508ff.) (2) The case of the emerging Third World Missionary Movement. Cf. James Wong, Peter Larson and Edward Pentecost, *Mission from the Third World* (Singapore: Church Growth Study Center, 1973). See also my article, "The Churches and Evangelistic Partnership" to appear in *The New Face of Evangelism*, René Padilla, ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976).

For a Catholic perspective of the problem, see Ivan Illich, *Celebration of Awareness: A Call for Institutional Revolution* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1969), pp. 53-68; and the study which IDOC (International Documentation and Communication Center) has been undertaking on *The Future of the Missionary Enterprise*, especially No. 9: *In Search for Mission: An Interconfessional and Intercultural Quest* (Rome: IDOC, 1974).

In North Atlantic Protestantism, this same issue is particularly treated in William J. Danker and Wi Jo Kang, *The Future of the Christian World Mission* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971); and John T. Boberg, S.V.D., and James A. Scherer, eds., *Mission in the '70s* (Chicago Cluster of Theological Schools, 1972). The latter is a joint Catholic-Protestant publication.

25. Cf., however, Santos-Hernández, *Misionología*, p. 197, where he points to the founding of a Mexican Missionary Union in 1937 and the subsequent

missiological reflections have been largely oriented to those questions and issues related to their concrete historical situation. To this must be added the fact that not only missiology as such but theology as a whole has had a late and slow start in Latin America. This partly explains why even though Christianity has had a much longer presence in Latin America than in its anglo-saxon counterpart, it has produced so very few theologians and has contributed so little to the mission of the universal church.

In the last fifteen years, however, Latin American Christians have become increasingly conscious of their situation. On the one hand, they have become aware of their dependence on the theological categories of the North Atlantic theologians. This has given way to an indigenous theological reflection which can be characterized as the first authentically Latin American theology. On the other hand, Latin American Christians have begun to be conscious of their missionary responsibility, especially in relation to their concrete historical situation. Thus the growing interest in Catholic and Protestant theologico-pastoral circles on the meaning of mission in contemporary Latin America.

This study is both a reflection of and a response to the mis-

establishment of a Missionary Seminary. In Colombia, a Seminary for Foreign Missions was founded in 1949. For his part, Enrique Dussel, commenting on the conclusions of the General Conference of the Latin America Episcopacy, held in Rio de Janeiro from July 25 to August 4, 1955, where CELAM (Latin America Episcopal Conference) was established, points out how the article on missions (IX) makes provision for a special department on missions to the Indians and the Black communities of the coastal areas. The latter also verifies Santos-Hernández' reference to a seminary for foreign missions in Mexico and takes notice of the fact that missionaries have been already sent to oriental Asia. (Cf. *Historia*, pp. 133-135.) Wong, *et al.*, points out how after World War II Protestant churches from many parts of Latin America sent missionaries to the USA, Portugal, Spain, Angola and Mozambique. (Cf. *Third World*, pp. 74ff.) I also recollect how in his message at the Latin American Congress on Evangelization in the USA (CLADE-USA), Rogelio Archilla, one of the foremost Latin American preachers of the '40s, '50s and early '60s, reported on the pioneer missionary efforts of Latin Americans from the Spanish-speaking churches in the USA in West Africa. Unfortunately it was an oral message and I was not able to gather the exact data from the speaker. This, however, is a fact that should be further researched in the future. (For an interpretative account of CLADE-USA, see my article, "Congreso latinoamericano de evangelización en los Estados Unidos: Crónica interpretativa de un evento histórico," *En Marcha! Internacional*, No. 17 (Julio-Diciembre 1970), 4-5.)

siological process of contemporary Latin American Christianity. A reflection, because it emerges out of my active involvement in this process as a Latin American churchman and student of the mission of the Christian faith. And a response, because it stems from the perceived need for a critical analysis of the missiological thought that has been taking place in recent years in the missionary engagement of Latin American Christians.

### MOMENTS IN THE MISSIOLOGICAL PROCESS

In this context, it is important to distinguish three moments in the Latin American missiological process.

#### *Primary Reflection*

The first is directly connected with the everyday life of the people of God in the world as well as their interaction with one another as a community of faith. It is a reflection that emerges along the way in relation to the living, everyday issues with which the Christian faith is constantly faced. Accordingly, it is intrinsically bound to the historical developments of the church and its various institutional and para-institutional expressions. Ian Fraser has rightly called this reflective moment a "primary theology" because it "provides the 'resource centre' for all other theological work."<sup>26</sup> In other words, this first missiological moment provides the raw material for the missiological task; it is a direct fruit of the reflection in missionary praxis referred to in the above definition of missiology.

#### *Reflection at Sundown*

This is followed by a more systematic moment, where the issues elucidated and brought out in the first are worked with theologically. This is the second step to which Gutiérrez refers to when he states that "*Theology follows*; it is the second step. What Hegel used to say about philosophy can likewise be applied to theology: it rises only at sundown."<sup>27</sup>

26. Ian Fraser, *The Fire Runs*: p. 53.

27. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, trans. and edited by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 11.



### *Comprehensive Reflection*

After sundown, however, there comes the need to take another look, more comprehensive and analytical, at what has come into being. A third moment thus appears wherein those issues elucidated in the first and separately worked upon in the second are analyzed as part of a total process.

The present study stands in between the second and third moment. It tries to bring into the open an aspect of the Latin American theological discourse which heretofore has appeared under different topics and subtopics. Indeed, the question of mission in Latin American theology cannot be found along traditional organizational categories and theological thought patterns. It is hidden in the ongoing life of the church and the theological issues which history has thrust upon her.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, it represents an attempt to bring together and critically analyze the most relevant reflections of the first and second moments. Such an undertaking not only permits a clear vision of the way Latin American Christians have been grappling with the question of mission, but also brings out into the limelight the missionary challenge *before* the church. Hopefully, this will, in turn, help to map out a more relevant course of action.

### DELIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The broadness of the field, however, makes necessary several delimitations.

#### *Geographical*

First, certain geographical boundaries must be established. For Latin America is far from being a homogeneous geographical unit. It includes not only the *tierra firme* (continental territory) that the Spanish *conquistadores* used to speak of — a large land mass which today extends from the Rio Bravo on the northern Mexican border to *tierra del fuego* (land of fire) at the bottom of Argentina —, but also the islands of the Caribbean Sea plus many islands in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans belonging to several of the Latin American nations. These lands constitute a vast topographical mosaic: huge mountain ranges, large tropical forests, arid deserts,

28. For a survey of the various forms that missiology takes in contemporary Latin America, see my article "Missiology in Contemporary Latin America," *EFMS Bulletin* (December, 1975).

coastal lands and fertile valleys and plains; hot-humid climate, cold-freezing weather and spring-like temperature; rain forests, lakes, rivers and volcanoes — they all give the lands south of the Rio Bravo a complex geographical variety.

This geographical complexity is further complicated by the people who have settled in them over the centuries. Indian aborigines, transplanted African, European and Asian communities and a host of *mestizos* give to these lands the distinctive character of containing some of the most diverse racial mixtures in the whole earth.

This is the result of many centuries of colonial domination coupled with a migratory process that has left its footprint in the population pockets that exists across the region. Thus, in addition to the thousands of Indian dialects and languages that exist in such population centers as Mexico, Central America, the Andes and Brazil, there are five major European languages: Spanish, Portuguese, English, French and Dutch (in that order). The most influential of these, because they are the languages spoken by the majority, are Spanish and Portuguese.

These two languages are representative of the greatest cultural influence in Latin America: the Hispanic and Lusitanian cultures of the Iberian Peninsula. This explains why Latin America is often referred to as Iberian America; the majority of its people are the cultural heirs of the two predominant languages and cultures of Iberia.

This topographical and cultural complexity makes necessary a geographic delimitation. It would simply be impossible to include all of geographic Latin America. Accordingly, for the purpose of this study, the generic term Latin America will be used in reference to the Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries south of the Rio Bravo plus the Spanish speaking countries of the Caribbean: Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

### *Ecclesio-Theological*

A second limitation is imposed by the broadness of Latin American Christianity. Not only is it represented by the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions and their respective variants, but also by a small Orthodox contingent as well as several religious bodies whose roots go back to one or more of the major expressions of the Christian faith, even though they stand outside of the main-

stream of Christianity. Such a plurality of Christian traditions makes necessary an ecclesio-theological delimitation.

This study will focus on Latin American Protestantism. It will consider the missiological trends stemming out of ecclesiastical bodies and socio-theological movements whose roots go back to the tradition of the Protestant Reformation.

This choice has been made on the basis of my perception of the need for a systematic analysis and evaluation of the missiology which is emerging out of the missionary engagement of Latin American Protestants. While there is a growing amount of informal and formal missiological literature, heretofore no one has taken the time to analyze it critically. In contrast, Latin American Catholicism has not only seen in the post Vatican II period, and especially since the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops,<sup>29</sup> a wealth of missiologically-oriented studies,<sup>30</sup> but also several efforts to

29. Held in Medellín, Colombia from 26 August to 6 September, 1968. For a complete record of the major documents, see: CELAM, *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America*, Vol. 1: *Position Papers*; Vol. II: *Conclusions* (Bogotá: General Secretariat of CELAM, 1970).

30. See, for example, the following studies of the Latin American Pastoral Institute:

Carlos Alvarez Calderón, *Pastoral y liberación humana* (Quito: Departamento de Pastoral CELAM, Colección IPLA No. 1, 1970).

Segundo Galilea, *Evangelización en América Latina* (*Ibid.*, No. 2, 1970).

*Catolicismo popular* (*Ibid.*, No. 3, 1970).

Segundo Galilea and José Comblin, *Cristianismo y desarrollo* (*Ibid.*, No. 5, 1970).

Gregorio Smutko, *Evangelizadores laicos para América Latina* (*Ibid.*, Nos. 6/7, 1970).

Enrique Dussel, *América Latina y conciencia cristiana* (*Ibid.*, No. 8, 1970).

Segundo Galilea, *Reflexiones sobre la evangelización* (*Ibid.*, No. 10, 1970).

*Idem.*, *¿A los pobres se les anuncia el evangelio?* (*Ibid.*, No. 11, n.d.).

*Fe y secularización en América Latina* (*Ibid.*, No. 12, 1972).

*Comunidad de base y prospectiva pastoral en América Latina* (*Ibid.*, No. 13, 1972).

*Pastoral popular y liberación en América Latina* (*Ibid.*, No. 14, 1972).

*Pastoral y lenguaje* (*Ibid.*, No. 18, 1974).

Segundo Galilea, *Introducción a la religiosidad popular* (Quito: Departamento de Pastoral CELAM, IPLA, Estudios sobre pastoral popular No. 2, n.d.).

See also Dussel, *Historia*, pp. 149-309; José Comblin, "Atualidade de Teologia da Missão," I-III, *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira*, 32:128, 33:129, 131 (Dezembro 1972, Marzo and Setembro 1973), 796, 5-34, 579-603; *Idem*, *Teología de la*

analyze systematically the major documents and currents.<sup>31</sup>

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the preparation of this work, a three-fold methodology has been used.

### *Historico-Theological*

An inductive historico-theological analysis of the major documents, reports, correspondence, articles and books has been undertaken in order to understand both the thought-process as well as the content of the missiological reflection that has taken place in recent years in Mainline Protestantism. This has been accompanied by a critical deductive reading of the same texts in order to interpret their meaning and evaluate their internal and external coherence in the

*misión* (Buenos Aires: Ed. Latinoamérica Libros, 1974); and the various publications on the Melgar, Peru, Caracas, Venezuela and Iquitos, Peru missionary consultations sponsored by the Department of Missions of CELAM: *Antropología y evangelización* (Mexico: Secretaría Ejecutiva del DMC, 1968) and *La pastoral en las misiones de América Latina* (Mexico: Secretaría Ejecutiva del DMC, n.d.). Witness also the works of Rafael Avila P., *Elementos para una evangelización liberadora* (Salamanca and Madrid: Ediciones Sígueme and Sociedad de Educación Atenas, 1971) and *Teología, evangelización y liberación* (Bogotá: Ediciones Paulinas-Indo-American Press Service, 1973). In addition, the edited work of Segundo Galilea, *Información teológica y pastoral sobre América Latina* (Bogotá: CLAR, 1974). Finally, the various theologies of liberation must be considered, given their focus on the life in mission of the church. Cf. Gustavo Gutiérrez' contention "that the question regarding the theological meaning of liberation is, in truth, a question about the very meaning of Christianity and about the mission of the Church." *Liberation*, p. xi.

31. For example: Ronaldo Muñoz, *Nueva conciencia de la iglesia en América Latina* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1974); Jacques van Nieuvenhove, "Rapports entre foi et praxis dans la théologie de la libération Latinoaméricaine: Diagnostic et prospective," Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Faculté de Théologie Catholique, Université des Sciences Humaines de Strassburg (1974), and Presentación Iturgaiz Civiza, "Hacia una evangelización liberadora," Unpublished dissertation for the degree of Licence en Cathequesis et Pastorale, Institut International de Catechese et de Pastorale "Lumen Vitae" (Bruxelles, 1973). Note also the three collections of documents from and about the church (mostly the Roman Catholic) in Latin America: *Between Honesty and Hope*, trans. by John Drury (New York: Maryknoll Publications, 1969); *Iglesia latinoamericana, ¿protesta o profecía?* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1969); *Signos de liberación: Testimonios de la iglesia en América Latina, 1969-1973* (Lima: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones (CEP), 1973).

light of the witness of biblical faith and the Latin American socio-cultural context.

### *Participation-Observation*

I have also incorporated into the research my own critical observations as a participant-observer. As a privileged actor in the process in consideration, I have drawn upon my experiences and observations throughout most of the countries of Latin America, especially during the last seven years, in interaction with the literature analyzed. These experiences and observations, recorded in numerous mental and written notes, essays, reports, minutes of meetings and correspondence have given me an inside track into the situation not usually available to the outside observer.

### *Interviews*

These critical observations have been collated with those of other participant-observers. Through numerous personal (oral) interviews, the content of which have been carefully recorded, and letters written to and received from Latin American Protestant leaders, I have been able to gather additional inside information that has helped me to further complete my understanding of the panorama. This has given me, at the same time, an opportunity "to check myself-out," thereby keeping under "control" the danger of excessive subjectivity which is always present in any research project.

The methodological approach outlined above is congruent with the interdisciplinary character of the subject, which, while having a theological focus, cannot limit itself to an abstract world of theology. Accordingly, an attempt has been made to incorporate into the analytical process the historical as well as the socio-cultural dimensions (with their psychological, economic and political implications) of Protestant missiology in relation to the concrete, continental, global reality.

The preceding lines have given a general introduction to the conceptual framework of this work. We must now turn to our object of study — Latin American Protestant Christianity, in general, and Mainline Protestantism, in particular — in order to become acquainted with the internal context.

## CHAPTER II

### PROTESTANTISM IN CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICA

The Protestant presence in Latin America is by no means a recent phenomenon. Indeed, it can be traced as far back as the middle of the 16th century when a group of French Huguenots arrived on the coast of Río de Janeiro. And even though this mission was shortlived, Protestantism reappeared in another form in 1630 in the Dutch colony of Pernambuco. Twenty-four years later, however, it disappeared once again with the Portuguese reconquest of the area. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries Protestants are said to have been present in México, Perú and Nicaragua, but they were quickly banished or executed by the Inquisition.<sup>1</sup> About the only really effective Protestant presence that can be spoken of during this period from the 16th to the early 19th century is that of the Moravians in Saint Thomas and Surinam, the Methodists in the English Caribbean and the Anglicans (and later the Moravians) on the Atlantic coast of Central America (especially Honduras and Nicaragua).<sup>2</sup>

In the early parts of the 19th century, Protestants reappeared in the form of migrant British colonists. This was closely followed by the work of James Thompson, a British Baptist pastor, who "attempted to promote a spontaneous reformation in Spanish America" through the building of Lancastrian-type schools and the distribution of the Bible.<sup>3</sup> It was not until 1860, however, that Protestant-

1. Cf., for example, Agustín Batille, "El advenimiento del protestantismo a América Latina," in Dussel, *Historia*, pp. 325ff.; E. G. Léonard, *O Protestantismo Brasileiro* (São Paulo: ASTE, 1963); G. Báez-Camargo, *Protestantes enjuiciados por la Inquisición en Iberoamérica* (1961); Prudencio Damboriana, *El protestantismo en América Latina*, II Tomos (Friburgo, 1961-62).

2. Cf. Justo L. González, *Historia de las misiones* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1970), pp. 189ff.; Kenneth Scott Latourette, *History of the Expansion of Christianity*, III (New York, 1937-1945), pp. 232-236.

3. J. B. A. Kessler, Jr., *A Study of the Older Protestant Missions and Churches in Perú and Chile* (Goes: Oosterbaan & le Cointre N.V., 1967), p. 19ff.

ism began to penetrate in a significant way. In that year, the first missionaries to be sent out by a missionary society (Presbyterian) arrived in a Latin American country (Brazil). Thereafter Protestantism in Latin America gradually became a definitive (minor but important) factor in the history of Latin American Christianity.

The purpose of this and the next chapter is to locate the Protestant phenomenon, in general, and its Mainline variant, in particular, in the tumultuous crossroads of contemporary Latin America. This calls for a general analysis of the Protestant movement in Latin America and its Mainline form, which serve as the *internal* context of the present study. Beyond that, there needs to be a survey of the *external* context, namely, the continental crossroads (issues, movements and events) in the period 1969-74. The latter constitutes the chronological boundaries of my research and defines the notion of "contemporary." In this chapter, I shall deal with the first item.

### UNDERSTANDING LATIN AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM

To understand Latin American Protestantism, one needs to bear in mind its heterogeneous character. For there are many varieties of Protestantism and several possible ways to identify them, none of which can exhaust its fullness. It all depends upon the angle from which one views it. Conscious of the complexity of this phenomenon, I have chosen to approach the problem from three different perspectives.

#### *A Historico-Socio-Ecclesiastical Approach*

The historico-socio-ecclesiastical approach is used by José Míguez-Bonino to determine the *corpus* of study in his own analysis of Latin American Protestantism.<sup>4</sup> He follows a typology which Christian Lalive D'Epinay<sup>5</sup> elaborated basically from J. Milton Yinger's

4. Cf. José Míguez-Bonino, "Visión del cambio social y sus tareas desde las iglesias no-católicas," *Fe cristiana y cambio social en América Latina* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1973), pp. 179ff.

5. Cf. Christian Lalive D'Epinay, "Les protestantismes latinoaméricains: un modèle typologique," *Archives de Sociologie des Religions*, 15:30 (1970), 33-58. Spanish translation: "Los protestantismos latinoamericanos: un modelo tipológico," *Fichas de ISAL*, III:24. Unfortunately I have not had access to either the original or its Spanish version. I am thus dependent on Míguez-Bonino's work.

"Types of Religious Organizations"<sup>6</sup> and applied systematically to Latin American Protestantism on the basis of two variables: "the sociological type of the mother church (*ecclesia*, denomination, established sect, conversionist sect) and the form and sphere of penetration . . ."<sup>7</sup> Míguez thus arrives at the following types:

A) The transplanted Protestant immigrant *ecclesia*, B) the established denomination of Protestant migrants (or "the introjected migrants' church"). C) the missionary denomination (or "traditional Protestantism" as the term is used in Latin America), D) the established conversionist sect ("Protestantism of sanctification") and E) the conversionist sect [Pentecostalism and "faith-mission" churches].<sup>8</sup>

While generally acceptable, and recognizing the tentative way in which Míguez employs it, this typology contains several weak spots that need strengthening. The most obvious is the misplacement of the Baptists (type-D instead of type-C). This deserves a brief comment.

A careful study of the two major Baptist parent bodies, the Southern Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Churches, coupled with a careful analysis of the major Latin American Baptist conventions (e.g. Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, El Salvador and Nicaragua) will quickly dispel any doubt about their conventionality and respectability within their own contexts.<sup>9</sup> That they contain sectarian tendencies it cannot be denied. But are there no sectarian tendencies in the majority of the churches assigned by Míguez to type C? What real sociological differences are there between the Disciples of Christ of Indianapolis, Indiana and the American Baptist Churches of Valley Forge, Pennsylvania? Or what differences are there between the Baptists and the Disciples of Christ in Puerto Rico? Or between the Southern Presbyterians and the

6. J. Milton Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 251ff. (adapted, in part, from his earlier work, *Religion, Society and the Individual: An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1957)). According to Míguez-Bonino, Lalive D'Epinay uses in a minor way other typological models such as that of Max Weber. Cf. his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958); *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

7. Míguez-Bonino, "Visión del cambio social," p. 170.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 179, 180.

9. Cf. Yinger, *Religion*, p. 264.



Southern Baptists in the USA, or the Presbyterians and the Baptists in Brazil? Sociologically, there is hardly any difference.

Beyond this, there is no difference whatever between the form of penetration into Latin America (Lalivie D'Epinay's second variable) of the Baptists and that of the other traditional denominations. In fact, the first Baptist to arrive in Latin America (James Thompson) showed hardly any desire to establish a denominational work.<sup>10</sup> Baptists participated in the "comity agreements"<sup>11</sup> of the major denominations in Central America and the Latin Caribbean. Baptist missionary societies entered at about the same time as the other Protestant denominations. And, at least in the case of the American (formerly known as Northern Baptists), the methods used were no different from those employed by the others.

Another weakness in the formulation of the above typology is the fact that it does not take into account the rapid process of socialization that the churches of type-D have undergone in the last 15 years. Neither does it seem to consider the increasing presence of the sectarian phenomenon in the type-C churches, except as a historical factor attributable to their ambiguous origin.<sup>12</sup> It is impossible, however, simply to attribute the processes of socialization and sectarianization to the origin of these churches because they have a contemporary thrust.

In the case of some type-C churches, there have been so many sectarian developments in recent years that it is difficult to utilize the category of "denomination" for all the traditional ecclesiastical groups. At the very least, one would have to say that the historical Protestant ecclesiastical traditions are represented by denominations *and* sects.

In the case of type-D churches, there has been such an enormous process of institutional development and social adaptation in such denominations as the Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Evangelical Free Church and the Covenant Church that it has become increasingly difficult to characterize them simply as "established

10. Cf. Kessler, *Perù and Chile*, p. 21.

11. For the historical background of the "comity" agreements, see R. Pearce Beaver, "Comity" in Neill, *et al.*, *Dictionary of Mission*, p. 123. Also by the same author, *Ecumenical Beginnings in Protestant World Mission: A History of Comity* (New York, 1962).

12. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

sects." It would seem as if a difference would have to be made between two types of missionary denominations: the traditional missionary denomination and the recent missionary denomination.

The same can be said with regards to the type-E churches. No account is taken of the fact that a similar, though milder, process has begun to take place in some of the Pentecostal<sup>13</sup> and "faith-missions" churches. This process is increasingly breaking the strictly sectarian character of these churches and pushing them toward established sects (type-D).

Apart from these corrective observations, however, the typology in consideration serves a useful purpose in the understanding of contemporary Protestant Christianity. For it underscores the latter's sources of origin, without which it is impossible to account for many of the behavioral characteristics of the various groups.

### *An Ideological Approach*

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that this approach is not comprehensive enough. As Rubem Alves has said, "to understand" the specific case of Latin American Protestantism "it is necessary to verify its conduct in the global context of Latin American society."<sup>14</sup> Alves goes on to question the validity of the historico-socio-ecclesiastical approach, arguing that it does not say anything "about the behavior" of the various Protestant groups. In fact, it "disfigures Protestantism," making it appear different from what it really is.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, he proposes a second approach, namely, the ideological.

Borrowing Mannheim's twofold concept of "utopia" and "ideology,"<sup>16</sup> Alves locates the divisions of Protestantism on "the process of reorganization" which its different groups are undergoing *vis à vis* the crisis of Latin American society. He further links these

13. Cf., for example, Beatriz Muniz de Souza, "Aspecto do Protestantismo Pentecostal em São Paulo," *Protestantismo e Imperialismo na América Latina* (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1968), pp. 112ff., where this phenomenon is taken account of in the Pentecostal churches of São Paulo.

14. Rubem Alves, "Función ideológica y posibilidades utópicas del protestantismo latinoamericano," in *De la iglesia y la sociedad* (Montevideo: Tierra Nueva, 1971), p. 4.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Cf. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Harvest Books, 1936).

concepts with Paul Tillich's "Protestant principle," *i.e.*, a critical attitude against any relative reality and especially the prophetic judgment against religious pride and secular self-sufficiency.<sup>17</sup> He distinguishes between what Protestantism could have been (its *utopian* possibilities: that of serving as a catalyst for the breakthrough of a new order) and what it has become (its *ideological* tendencies: the inhibition of its directedness toward the future and its capacity to transform reality<sup>18</sup>). He maintains that in the

17. Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 163. H. Richard Niebuhr formulates this principle differently in his *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1937), pp. 24ff. Niebuhr defines the "Protestant principle" as the confession of the sole rulership of God and the declaration of loyalty to his kingdom. This notion encompassed three elements: (1) *vividness* (God's direct rule; against the rule of reason and the rule of the Church); (2) *absoluteness* (the free God; against those who would make man's freedom the starting point of theology and ethics); and (3) *temporal immediacy* (the possibility of sharing in the life of the kingdom now; against those who would defer participation in the new order of life to a future stage). Such a perspective allows not only for Tillich's concept of the critical (revolutionary) spirit of Protestantism, but also for the Pietistic emphasis on personal experience and the Calvinistic concept of the depravity of man and the absoluteness of God, which serve as a check to those who like Alves may have tended to historicize God in such a way as to obliterate his otherness. Cf. Rubem Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope* (Washington: Corpus Books, 1969), pp. 133ff.

18. This concept of ideology was typical of the ISAL (Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina) Movement in the 60's. See, for example, Hiber Contreris, "El marco ideológico de la revolución latinoamericana," in *Responsabilidad social del cristiano* (Montevideo: ISAL, 1964), pp. 91ff.; *Idem.*, ed., *Hombre, ideología y revolución en América Latina* (Montevideo: ISAL, 1965); Julio Barreiro, *et al.*, *El destino de latinoamérica: la lucha ideológica* (Montevideo: Editorial Alfa, 1969); *Idem.*, *Ideologías y cambios sociales* (Montevideo: Editorial Alfa, 1971).

The problem with this concept, borrowed whole from Mannheim and the sociology of knowledge school, is that it sees ideology only as a mere reflex of a given social, economic and cultural situation. It does not see its autonomous possibilities. An ideology is not merely a schematic conception of reality conditioned by the environment that helps social groups to program their action in order to attain their interests (Barreiro, *Ideologías*, p. 28). It is a theoretical conceptualization related to a strategy and a program of action always to be actualized in a concrete historical situation. In other words, an ideology is not only a reflex of the social reality but *also* a reflex of reflection on that reality. It is thus not absolutely conditioned by a given historical situation but has an *idenpendet* character.

For a critique of Mannheim's notion of ideology, see The Frankfurt Institute

contemporary situations of Latin America, where a general consciousness of the need to create a new society is perceived,<sup>19</sup> "Protestantism could act . . . as a catalyzer, if its utopian possibilities . . . with all of its promises of transformation, . . . would find a way to insert themselves in our historic moment."<sup>20</sup> But, he adds:

Its forms of thought have been dominated in such a way by individualism, that Protestantism cannot produce categories to understand problems of a structural nature.

This seems very strange . . . because the contradiction between the personal and the structural, so characteristic of Protestantism, could and should have created an ethic through which the personal would have accepted as its own vocation the transformation of the very structures which it opposes, in order to reconcile itself with them. But it did not work this way and the reason is very simple and of great importance for understanding the structure and global function of the Protestant mentality. *Protestantism, instead of considering the contradiction between the personal and the structural in dialectical terms, interpreted it in dualistic terms* . . . Thus the typical formulation of the dominant ecclesiology: the church, as community, does not participate in social transformations. Its task is to convert unbelievers and protect the converted. In consequence, the world as such and specifically the Latin American world with its values, style of life, and culture is considered as evil.<sup>21</sup>

Against this type of Protestantism, Alves proposes a new one, prophetically represented by small groups which have begun to "reinterpret the symbols of their faith, but in the direction of the utopia or prophetic messianism of the Old Testament."<sup>22</sup> He states further that this process is taking place especially "in certain groups which have been marginalized by the official structures,"<sup>23</sup> a con-

for Social Research, *Aspects of Sociology*, trans. by John Viertel (London: Heinemann, 1973), pp. 196-198. For a more positive definition of ideology, see, in addition to the latter, pp. 182-205, the following: "Engels à A. F. Mehring" Londres, 14 de julio de 1893," in *Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels sobre religión*, Hugo Assmann - Reyes Mate, eds. (Salamanca: Sigueme, 1974), p. 453; Andrés Dumas, *Ideología y fe* (Montevideo: Tierra Nueva, 1970), p. 28.

19. For a discussion of Alves, *et al.*'s optimistic perception of the Latin American revolutionary process at the end of the 60's, see the section on ISAL in chapter IX.

20. Alves, "Función ideológica," p. 15.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 17.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

23. *Ibid.*

flict that explains "the fractures that presently divide . . . Protestant denominations . . ." <sup>24</sup> For Alves, then, there are two types of Protestants: conservatives and revolutionaries.

Míguez-Bonino, while proposing a similar ideological interpretation, questions Alves' argument because Alves neither makes any distinction between the different types of Protestantisms nor takes sufficient account of "the historical dimension." <sup>25</sup> What is this historical dimension? According to Míguez, it is the "liberal project" <sup>26</sup> of the 18th and 19th century through which Protestantism began to penetrate in Latin America and into which it was consciously or unconsciously (but mostly unconsciously) inserted. He says that Protestantism must be seen against the background of the international liberal-modernist movement and its capitalistic economic system that has dominated Latin America for the last two centuries. <sup>27</sup> Elsewhere he states:

At the moment when our countries were slowly emerging from their colonial past and were seeking to integrate into the modern world, Protestantism constituted for them a call to change and transformation, centered in the religious sphere but with an effect on the totality of life and society . . . Protestantism was incorporated into the 'liberal-modernist' movement represented by such names as Sarmiento, Rivadavia, Lastarria, Bilbao, etc., with their anti-clerical battle against the traditional pre-modern ethos. It is significant that without becoming Protestant Christians, the leaders of this movement were favorable to the coming of Protestantism, both as immigration and mission. This inevitably linked Protestantism to the neo-colonial-imperialist expansion of the largely Protestant countries into Latin America. The external link is historically evident. The internal ties are less clear but relate to ideas of liberty, progress and individuality, and has both an ethical, personalizing liberating aspect as well as a political, economic aspect that binds them to imperialist capitalism. <sup>28</sup>

24. *Ibid.*

25. It is obvious that when Alves speaks of Protestantism he is specifically referring to its Mainline variant. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 20, where he specifically states that he is referring to "traditional Protestant denominations."

26. The notion of "project" is defined by Míguez "as a midway term between an utopia, a vision which makes no attempt to connect itself historically to the present [,] and a program, a technically developed model for the organization of society." José Míguez-Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 38.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 11f.

28. *Idem*, "The Political Attitude of Protestants in Latin America," trans. by

From this perspective, it becomes obvious that for Míguez contemporary Latin American Protestantism finds itself in an ambiguous situation. On the one hand, it has played a minor but important critical role in the overthrow of traditional society "by introducing new norms, values and institutions contrary to the existing ones."<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the liberal project with which Protestantism has been linked is perceived today as being "highly [enigmatic], [containing] negative consequences (imperialism and domination), and [having] no real future."<sup>30</sup> To be sure, the Protestant participation in this liberal project has been mostly unconscious and involuntary. Even so, the awareness of this fact "does not solve the problem of [the] ambiguity [of Protestantism] . . . We find ourselves participating in the creation of an order whose inhumanity and perversion are more evident every day."<sup>31</sup>

In the light of this reality, Míguez-Bonino distinguishes three major ideological types among Protestants. First, there are significant numbers of Protestants who, following the phrase of Lalive D'Epinay, have gone on "a social strike."<sup>32</sup> That is, they "refuse to take any responsibility for social processes. To them, religion belongs to the individual, private sphere."<sup>33</sup> Of course, when a person becomes a Christian he or she should demonstrate a distinctive quality of life. By his or her industriousness, honesty, respect for the law and sobriety he or she will become an asset to society. "But every intent to relate faith and Christian doctrine to the public sphere is considered an 'intrusion' which violates both the 'lay' character of the public sphere (remember the anticlerical heritage) and the 'spiritual' purity of the faith."<sup>34</sup>

James and Margaret Goff from the Spanish original in *Noticiero de la Fe*, XXXVII:9 (July, 1972), (mimeographed), p. 4.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. Christian Lalive D'Epinay, *El refugio de las masas* (Santiago: Editorial El Pacifico, 1968). For an opposite view, see Emilio Willems, *Followers of the New Faith: Culture Change and the Rise of Protestantism* (Nashville, Tennessee, 1967). Lalive D'Epinay's assessment is also refuted by C. Peter Wagner, *Look Out! the Pentecostals are Coming* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, 1973), pp. 143ff.

33. Míguez-Bonino, *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*,

Secondly, there are those who "insist on supporting the liberal project".<sup>35</sup> They are the defenders of institutional democracy, classical forms of freedom; socio-economic developmentalism and the Western capitalistic enterprise. For them, what is at stake is the Christian value of freedom, defined in terms of "the categories of liberal thought and translated into the common liberties of elections, press, commerce, etc".<sup>36</sup> They fail to take into account the realities of society; *i.e.*, the fact that within "the existing conditions of Latin American society, the formal concept of 'freedom' is merely a game with rules that favor those who possess [economic, military and political] power . . ." <sup>37</sup> Moreover, they fail to recognize that the developmentalistic approach (the notion that underdeveloped countries will be able to achieve full development through capital investment, economic integration and social reforms) "has failed in its announced purpose of achieving a 'take-off' for accelerated progress in our countries."<sup>38</sup> On the contrary, studies and statistics show that such an approach has only benefited the Western capitalistic powers, further binding Latin American nations and making them even more dependent on the goodwill, know-how and economic power of the investors, the great multinational corporations.

A third group is described as "revolutionary". These Christians advocate active participation in the process of liberation from the situation of economic dependence on foreign capital and technical know-how and the internal domination of national oligarchies and corrupt politicians. They call for the radical transformation of the social, economic and political structures of the Continent. In this sense, they try to recapture the "subversive" role that Protestant Christianity once played, but then from "within the radically different situation" in which Latin America finds itself today.<sup>39</sup>

Generally speaking, Míguez-Bonino's ideological typology is much more complete than Alves'. It not only identifies and delineates much more clearly the lines of difference, but shows how these three types correspond to the historical typological categories of Lalive

35. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*,

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

D'Epinay. Thus, the first ideological type is found in types-E churches, the second in types-B, -C and -D churches (traditional Protestantism and sanctificational Protestantism) and the third in type-B and -C churches (the Protestant radical wing).<sup>40</sup>

There are, nevertheless, at least two missing links in Míguez' analysis.<sup>41</sup> For one thing, there is reason to believe that the so-called "social strike" of Pentecostals (and others) is rapidly coming to an end, at least in some sectors. Thus we see, for example, the increasingly political consciousness of Pentecostal leaders and also of significant pockets of the laity in places like Chile and Brazil.

At the same time, there are overlapping positions between types, which significantly complicate the ideological picture. The so-called Protestant ethic, which has made its way into the ethical structure of Pentecostalism, has had not only a negative but also a positive impact on the political attitude of Pentecostals. It has led them to withdraw from socio-political responsibilities, but it has also led them to affirm respect for established authority, thereby making them militant advocates of law and order, which is the foundation of what Alves has rightly referred to as "conservative ideology." Accordingly, while there is significant truth to Lalive's concept of the "social strike", it is also true that this only represents a part of the total picture.

In other words, ideologically Pentecostalism represents both a passive and an active conservative posture, as can be verified by recent events in Chile. Furthermore, in recent years there have been small but significant Pentecostal pockets closely linked with the second and third ideological types, but which maintain, at the same time, spiritual and theological relationships with the mainstream of Pentecostalism.<sup>42</sup> This puts them into a unique position, and cannot, therefore, be defined as belonging to either one or the other but must be viewed as variants of both.

The same applies to other sectors. There are Christians in type-B and -C churches who have taken a definite conservative (and reactionary) ideological stance. There is also a small but growing

40. Cf. *Idem*, "Visión del cambio social", pp. 194-201.

41. Although, admittedly, he does take rather perfunctory notice of these factors in notes 30 and 38 of his "Visión del cambio social", p. 195, 198.

42. Cf., for example, Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecost Between Black and White: Five Case Studies on Pentecost and Politics* (Belfast: Christian Journalist Limited, 1974), pp. 33-54.



number of what could be called "radical Evangelicals," who – while accepting in varying degrees the analysis of the third ideological type and identifying themselves with its socio-economic-political commitment – constitute, nevertheless, a significant ideological sub-type with characteristics of its own and alternatives closely related to Evangelical-Protestant Christianity.

#### *A Theologico-Historico-Ecumenical Approach*

The two approaches considered above have given us a generally comprehensive, but still partial description of Latin American Protestantism. For the latter is not only a historico-socio-ecclesiastical phenomenon with strong ideological overtones. It also represents a movement with a variety of organized relationships and theologico-historical characteristics that are not clarified by the two approaches already considered. Such factors as experiential and doctrinal concerns, direct and indirect transdenominational and international relationships, coupled with at least two recent significant events lead us to propose a third approach.

Using the above criteria, three broad types of Protestantism not clearly delineated in the other typologies can be sorted out: (1) Mainline Protestantism, (2) Evangelical Protestantism and (3) Pentecostal Protestantism. These types either represent an experiential-doctrinal concern (second and third types) or can be distinguished by their "ecumenical" relationship and/or recent significant events (first and second types).

*Evangelical Protestantism* is defined by the three characteristics of its predominantly Anglo-Saxon progenitor and counterpart.<sup>43</sup> These

43. To link Latin American Evangelical Protestantism with its Anglo-Saxon counterpart is but to recognize a historical and supraorganizational ecumenical reality. To be sure, there is on both counts a great deal of cultural imperialism. Evangelical Protestantism represents a transplanted historical phenomenon which continues to maintain its links with (and theological dependence on) the Evangelical Movement of the Anglo-Saxon world, predominantly in its North American variant, through formal and informal institutions. This reality, however, does not abrogate the fact that traditional Evangelical characteristics have become such a fundamental part of the theology of a segment of Latin American Protestants that it is hard to deny it without also denying its existence. In other words, Evangelical Protestantism in Latin America is a sociological fact that cannot be denied. And since its historical roots and contemporary links are to be found in the Anglo-Saxon world, the theology of Latin American Evangelicalism

are the insistence on (1) the authority of the Bible in all matters of faith and practice; (2) conversion as a distinct experience of faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour, which distinguishes the Christian from the non-Christian; and (3) the practice of evangelization as the fundamental dimension of the mission of the Christian faith. That these constitute distinguishing characteristics of that specific branch

must be seen in the light of its Anglo-Saxon progenitor and counterpart. (Cf. Willems, *Followers*, pp. 5ff.)

Several Latin American Evangelical writers have addressed themselves in recent times to the issue of Anglo-Saxon cultural domination (especially in its North American form) through the missionary enterprise. (See, for example, C. René Padilla, "Evangelism and the World," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: A Comprehensive Reference Volume on World Evangelization* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), pp. 116ff.; Ruben Lores, "Manifest Destiny and the Missionary Enterprise," in *Study Encounter*, XI:1 (1975), 15 pp., and my own *The Church and Its Mission*. (pp. 10ff.)

Lores' study is especially significant because of the way it links the politico-religious ideology of "manifest destiny" with the foreign missionary movement of the USA. Lores argues that missionary societies in general, and North American in particular, have transmitted "a 'body' of attitudes, economic ideas, and rational loyalties that are more substantially related to the ideology of 'manifest destiny' than to the Gospel . . ." (p. 2).

The major strength of this article is that it shows how this has happened. Its weakness lies in the fact that while recognizing that the aforementioned ideology is rooted in Anglo-Saxon culture, Lores limits his analysis to the North American variant. He thus fails to take full account of the fact that this was part of a larger process related to the entire European-North American missionary movement, which developed simultaneously with the rise of the liberal-capitalistic era, and above all, that it was especially a characteristic of the British missionary movement (and perhaps even more so in the 19th century!) as well as that of the USA. (See, for example, Bernard Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution* (London: Heinemann, 1973), pp. 146ff, where two full chapters are dedicated to the relation between Methodism and England's world and national mission; Martin Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970), p. 17.) Indeed, in reference to Latin America, it is not until the last decade of the 19th century that the concept of "manifest-destiny" began to play a role in the missionary enterprise. (Most of Lores' hard nose evidence begins with the McKinley era: the 1890s!) Prior to that a similar phenomenon can be detected in the colonial era (cf. Dussel, *Historia*, pp. 53ff.; Darcy Ribeiro, *The Americas and Civilization* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1972), pp. 53ff.) under Spanish and Portuguese rule. And it is not until the 20th century that we can really appreciate its North American impact in the countries of the "southern cone." The British were the ones who really penetrated and imposed their cultural stamp on South America during its early missionary history. (Cf. Míguez-Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. 14f.).

of Protestant Christianity called "Evangelical" can be verified by the following factors.

In his study on the geography of Evangelical theology, Bernard Ramm, states that

In the most general sense, evangelical Christianity refers to that version of Christianity which places the priority of the Word and Act of God over the faith, response, or experiences of men. Concretely this means the supremacy and authority of the Word of God (as a synonym for all the revelation of God, written and unwritten) over all human philosophies of religions. Truth in the garments of theology is prior to, and more fundamental than, faith or experience.<sup>44</sup>

While Ramm includes in his understanding of Evangelicalism those who identify themselves as Fundamentalists as well as those who shy away from the term because of its connotations, the former would not appreciate such a broad definition. To be sure, they would stand by Ramm's insistence on the supremacy of revelation. But they would go a step further.

Thus, George W. Dollar has defined "historical fundamentalism" as "the literal exposition of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-Biblical affirmations and attitudes."<sup>45</sup> Dollar states that the "new evangelical" formulations of men like Ramm represent the enemy within historic Fundamentalism.<sup>46</sup> He takes notice of, and uses as an argument in his favor, the criticism that the "new evangelicals" have made of Fundamentalism; i.e., "it is too negative, too naive on social needs, and too insistent on literalism in Biblical interpretation."<sup>47</sup>

44. Bernard Ramm, *The Evangelical Heritage* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1973), p. 13.

45. George W. Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (Greenville, S.C.: Bob Jones University Press, 1973), p. xiv. For a serious critique of this book, see H. Crosby Englezian, "History and Polemic," in *Christianity Today*, XIX:8 (January 17, 1975), 28ff.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 203ff.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 206. For an analysis of the North American Neo-Evangelical school of thought up to the middle of the 60's, see Robert P. Lightner, *New Evangelicalism* (Des Plaines, Illinois: Regular Baptist Press, 1965); and Milard Erikson, *New Evangelical Theology* (Westwood, N.J.: Revell, 1968). This school, however, has been slowly left behind with the emergence of a more radical Evangelical nuclei not only in the USA but in Europe and Latin America. See, for example, the following journals and magazines in the USA: *The Other Side*

In spite of the way in which Dollar characterizes Fundamentalism, and even though some Evangelicals would question Ramm's contention that in Evangelical Protestant Christianity "truth in the garments of theology is prior to, and more fundamental than, faith or experience",<sup>48</sup> it can be generally agreed that one of the basic distinctives of Evangelicalism is the insistence on the authority of the Bible as the Word of God.

This position is held by a significant sector of Latin American Protestants. For example, the "Evangelical Declaration" of the First Latin American Congress on Evangelization (CLADE '69) affirms:

Our presence in this Congress has been a manifestation of our unity in Christ, whose spiritual and not organizational nature has deep roots in our common evangelical heritage, based upon [*fundamentada*] the truths of the Bible, whose authority as the Word of God illumined by the Holy Spirit we categorically affirm.<sup>49</sup>

One year later, at the founding meeting of the Latin American Theological Fraternity, a group of Evangelical pastors and theologians from Latin America and Spain drew up another declara-

(Philadelphia); *The Post American* (Washington); and *Right on!* (Berkeley). Cf. also, among others, Richard A. Quebedeaux, *The Young Evangelicals* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); and John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973). For a vivid illustration of the difference between the Neo-Evangelicals and the Young (radical) Evangelicals, see Carl F. H. Henry, "Revolt on Evangelical Frontiers," in *Christianity Today* (April 26, 1974), pp. 4ff.; and Jim Wallis' response, "'Revolt on Evangelical Frontiers': A Response," *Ibid.* (June 21, 1974), p. 30f. This trend took an international shape in the "Response to Lausanne" published in the official publication of the International Congress on Evangelization under the title "Theological Implications of Radical Discipleship," in *Let the Earth*, pp. 1294ff. Interestingly, the latter was prepared and defended not only by North American Young Evangelicals but also (and especially so) by Evangelicals from Great Britain, Australia and several parts of the Third World, including at least three from Latin America.

48. Ramm, *Heritage*, p. 13. This is questioned by Donald Dayton, "Where Now Young Evangelicals?", *The Other Side* (March-April, 1974), 32. It is defended, however, by John W. Stott, *Christ the Controversialist: A Study in some Essentials of Evangelical Religion* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), pp. 27-46. A milder version of Stott and Ramm's view is found in Donald G. Bloesch, *The Evangelical Renaissance* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973), pp. 48-79.

49. "Declaración evangélica de Bogotá," *Acción en Cristo para un Continente en Crisis* (San José: Editorial Caribe, 1970), p. 134.

tion. The "Cochabamba Declaration", fruit of a heated consultation on "revelation",<sup>50</sup> is a theological amplification of the CLADE statement on the authority of the Bible.

The Bible derives its authority from its link with that revelation of God that culminates in Jesus Christ. It is Scripture whose words, having been inspired by God, communicate the Word of God, and infallibly fulfill the purpose for which they were given: that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:11, 17). It is a book written by men and as such carries the indelible marks of the human; but it is, at the same time, a divine book, written under the control of the Holy Spirit. The denial of the fact of inspiration is ultimately equivalent to the denial of God's special revelation.<sup>51</sup>

It can thus be seen how what in the Anglo-Saxon world is recognized as a distinctive mark of Evangelicalism applies also to Latin America. Moreover, there are in Latin America shades of Evangelicalism that pass from rigid Fundamentalism to Neo-Evangelicalism of the variety of Carl F. H. Henry and Bernard Ramm to an emerging Radical-Evangelicalism.<sup>52</sup>

A second characteristic of Latin American Evangelical Protestantism is its insistence on the conversion experience as a distinguishing mark of the Christian. In spite of the subordination that this

50. This consultation was highlighted by the fact that all of the potential participants from the Latin American Biblical Seminary in San José, Costa Rica were not allowed to participate because of their critical theological stance and especially their strong criticism of the manipulation of a sector from the North American Evangelical missionary establishment. A strong protest was aired at the consultation by René Padilla and Samuel Escobar. Partly as a result of their influence, several professors of the aforementioned seminary were later invited to join the Fraternity.

51. "Declaración Evangélica de Cochabamba," *El debate contemporáneo sobre la Biblia*, Peter Savage, ed. (Barcelona: Ediciones Evangélicas Europeas, 1972), p. 226.

52. For example, there is an avowed contingent of the International Christian Council, especially in Mexico, Guatemala and Chile. This is complemented by many small Fundamentalist magazines and more sophisticated literature such as the Scofield Reference Bible. The works of leading "intellectual" Fundamentalists like Gresham Machen are just beginning to be translated and the thought of Neo-Evangelicals like Henry and Ramm have filtered down through some of their students, their original and translated works and Henry's Latin American lectures. A new, more autochthonous and Radical-Evangelical form is beginning to appear through the latest efforts of the Latin American Theological Fraternity, periodicals like CERTEZA, the influence of the thinking of men like

emphasis has suffered at the hands of North American Evangelicals like Ramm, it is, nevertheless, as basic to Evangelicalism as the fact that its historical roots are to be found in the Pietistic Movement in continental Europe, Puritan Pietism and the Evangelical Movement of the 17th and 18th century in England and the Great Awakening of the 18th century in North America.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, one of the great weaknesses of Ramm's account of the theology of Evangelical Protestantism is its failure to make reference to the great revival movements mentioned above. Though he alludes to their contribution in the thought of men like Jonathan Edwards, he fails to note their great spiritual motive!<sup>54</sup>

In Latin America, Evangelical Protestantism has been characterized by its emphasis on personal regeneration. This can be verified by examining the requirement for membership in any number of churches. Without exception, an Evangelical congregation or denomination can be identified by its insistence on a personal public testimony of faith. And even in those cases of transfer of membership, the experience of personal conversion is assumed. The experience of faith is furthermore assumed in the theological discourse of those who in the tradition of their Anglo-Saxon spiritual fathers call themselves Evangelical. This has been especially underscored in numerous articles and books published in the last several years.<sup>55</sup>

John Howard Yoder, the more progressive British Evangelicals (John Stott and Michael Green) and the Latin American Theology of Liberation, and the literary efforts of René Padilla, Samuel Escobar, Jorge León, Ruben Loes and others. The latter trend, however, is still too much in the embryonic stage and diffused to be really considered a "school of thought."

53. Cf. J. Van den Berg, *Constrained by Jesus Love: An Inquiry Into the Motives of the Missionary Awakening in Great Britain in the Period Between 1698 and 1815* (Kampen: J. H. Kok N.V., 1956), pp. 116f., 122; F. Ernest Stoefler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), pp. 6ff.; *Idem*, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), *passim*; Semmel, *Revolution*, pp. 81ff.; Winthrop S. Hudson, *American Protestantism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 78; H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America*, pp. 88ff.

54. Cf. Harold Simonson, *Jonathan Edwards: Theologian of the Heart* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

55. Cf. René Padilla, "La autoridad de la Biblia en la teología latino-americana," in *Debate*, p. 152; *Idem*, "World," in *Let the Earth*; Samuel Escobar, "Evangelism and Man's Search for Freedom, Justice and Fulfillment," *Ibid.*, pp. 303ff.; Emilio Antonio Nuñez, "Personal and Eternal Salvation and Human

Thirdly, there is the characteristic of evangelization. It was José Míguez-Bonino, a Mainline churchman and theologian, who several years ago pointed out how Latin American Protestantism has developed historically along two missiological lines: that which has emphasized "civilization" (building schools, hospitals, orphanages and so on) and that which has put the stress on "evangelization." "These two tendencies subsist," according to him, "in Latin American Protestantism and have entered into conflict with each other more than once . . . sometimes changing their form of expression, but always present."<sup>56</sup>

That evangelization is a distinguishing mark of a large sector of Latin American Protestants can be further substantiated by numerous movements, events and essays. For example, the Evangelism in Depth movement of the sixties, which swept across many countries of Latin America and from there spread to many countries in Asia, Africa, North America and Europe, was, in spite of its theoretical inclusivism, sponsored and supported largely by Evangelical-type groups and churches.<sup>57</sup> I might also mention in this connection: CLADE-'69, the largest and most comprehensive gathering ever of Evangelical Protestants from the Continent and Spanish-speaking USA held in Bogotá, Colombia in November, 1969;<sup>58</sup> the contemporary practice of mass evangelistic cam-

Redemption," *Ibid.*, pp. 1060ff.; Hector Espinoza, "The Biblical Mission of the Church in Worship, Witness and Service," *Ibid.*, pp. 1093ff.; Ismael Amaya, *Teología bíblica del evangelismo* (Miami: Editorial Vida, 1970), *passim*; and, especially, the historical analysis of the phenomenon of conversion with reference to the Latin American situation by Victoria Araya, in "Tensiones histórico-teológicas en la evangelización," *Hacia una teología de la evangelización*, Orlando E. Costas, ed. (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1973), pp. 191ff.

56. José Míguez-Bonino, "Cristianismo en América Latina," in *Orientación*, 19:1 (enero-marzo, 1971), p. 10.

57. Cf., among other things, the bibliography at the end of my *Teología*, pp. 275ff.; Wilton M. Nelson, "Panorama histórico de la evangelización," *Ibid.*, pp. 174, 173; and Paul E. Pretiz, ed., "In-Depth Evangelistic Movements Around the World," *Occasional Essays* (July, 1974), pp. 1-33 (mimeographed). For two recent interpretative analyses of the In-depth Evangelism Movement, see H. Rosin, "Current Aspects of Evangelization," in *Exchange*, No. 10 (April, 1975), 28-36; and my own "Depth in Evangelism: An Interpretation of 'In Depth Evangelism' Around the World" and "In-Depth Evangelism in Latin America," in *Let the Earth*, pp. 211ff.; 675ff.

58. Cf. *Acción en Cristo*.

paigns;<sup>59</sup> and the continental Church Growth Study of the 60's.<sup>60</sup>

While it is a generally accepted fact that *Pentecostal Protestants* are also characterized by the three theological marks of Evangelicalism mentioned above,<sup>61</sup> they are, nevertheless, *distinguished* by their doctrine of the Holy Spirit.<sup>62</sup> Yet, it is not the latter as such that constitutes the fundamental mark of the Pentecostal Movement, but rather the *experience* of baptism of the Holy Spirit with its concomitant charismatic manifestations.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, the name Pentecostal is derived from the experience of the early church on the day of Pentecost as recorded by Acts of the Apostles. It is this more than any thing else that differentiates them from the other two types of Latin American Protestantism.

*Mainline Protestantism* is, in contrast, characterized by its historic organizational ties. It represents, on the one hand, the historic denominations of the types-B and -C churches which still maintain, in varying degrees, organizational and/or fraternal relations with their counterparts in North America and Europe. On the other hand, it represents Latin American Ecumenical Protestantism.

59. Cf. the two studies by Pretiz and Pereira-de-Souza on evangelistic campaigns in Cuenca, Ecuador and San José, Costa Rica: Paul E. Pretiz, "Cuenca: Two Years Later", *In-Depth Evangelism Around the World*, 1:2 (July-September, 1973, 22-23, 26-30; and José Pereira-de-Souza, *Los efectos de la Cruzada Costa Rica '72 sobre las iglesias evangélicas de San José* (San José: Publicaciones INDEF, 1973).

60. Cf. W. R. Read, V. M. Monterroso and H. A. Johnson, *Latin American Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969).

61. Cf. Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Churches* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), pp. 291ff., 315ff.; Christian Lalive D'Epinay, *El refugio*, pp. 230ff., 77ff.

62. Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, pp. 321ff. Cf. also Leslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (London: SCM, 1953), pp. 87ff. Newbigin finds the essence of Pentecostalism reflected in the question "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2). He places this question alongside the Protestant ("What think you of the Christ?") and Catholic (What think you of the Church?) emphases. For a theological appraisal (that has been questioned by Hollenweger but which is highly regarded for its seriousness) of the Pentecostal doctrine of the Holy Spirit, see Frederick Dale Brunner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970). See also P. Schoonenberg, "El bautismo con Espíritu Santo", *La experiencia del Espíritu*, *Concilium*, Número especial en homenaje a Edward Schillebeeckx (noviembre 1974), 59ff.

63. Hollenweger, *Pentecostals*, pp. 335, 336.



To be sure, these distinctions are relative.<sup>64</sup> For it is a known fact that the majority of these churches and their respective membership can also be characterized by the three Evangelical marks mentioned above. This explains why the term "evangelical" is used in Latin America in reference to all Protestants irrespective of their denominational affiliation.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, with the emergence of the Neo-Pentecostal movement, there are many Mainline groups and individuals that have adopted a modified version of the distinguishing mark of the Pentecostals. And it is a well-known and accepted fact that very few Mainline churches form part of the organized Ecumenical Movement, if by this is understood that movement which is embodied in the World Council of Churches (WCC).<sup>66</sup>

64. Cf. Julio de Santa Ana, *Protestantismo, cultura y sociedad: Problemas y perspectivas de la fe evangélica en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1970), p. 113.

65. The socio-theological category of "evangelical" is usually designated by such terms as "pietism," "conservatism" or "fundamentalism", but these are terms that have too many negative social, political and theological connotations and are not necessarily accepted or appreciated by the newer breed of Latin American Evangelical churchleaders and theologians. These leaders have often protested at the way certain groups of Evangelicals persist in considering all those who are not part of their respective branch of Evangelical Protestantism to be "liberals", "modernists", etc. In many ways this was the problem with Peter Wagner's book, *Latin American Theology, Leftist or Evangelical?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), which otherwise served a useful purpose in that it challenged Evangelicals not satisfied with such a theological approach to begin producing theology of their own.

Needless to say, the term "evangelical" is used in this work as a typological category; as stated above, because it describes a distinct phenomenon in Latin American Protestantism which is linked to a specific Protestant tradition designated by that term in the socio-cultural context from which it came. If it had been the German tradition that made the greatest impact, the term "pietism" would have been used. But it was the Anglo-Saxon tradition that Latin America inherited, and that is called Evangelicalism. In order to distinguish between Evangelical and Mainline Protestantism, wherever the term *evangélico* is used in reference to the latter, the word Protestant will be used. To avoid confusion, the term Evangelical has been and will continue to be capitalized wherever it is used to designate the former.

66. Of the 300-plus estimated Protestant denominations only 23 belong to the WCC (Cf., for example, the report in *Ecumenical Press Service* "Latin American Churches Set Ecumenical Priorities", EPS, No. 30 (31st October, 1974), 10).

Interestingly, of the few that do belong to the WCC two are Pentecostal.

It must also be taken into account that a great deal of so-called Ecumenical Protestantism has revolved around para-ecclesiastical organizations. The first Ecumenical body, for example, was ULAJE (Union of Latin American Protestant Youth). It was followed by MEC (Student Christian Movement), and later by ISAL (Church and Society in Latin America), CELADEC (Latin American Protestant Commission of Christian Education) and UNELAM (Latin American Movement for Protestant Unity). The latter two, while being avowedly organisms of churches, have seen the need of making room in their respective constitutions and by-laws for para-ecclesiastical organizations.

These different Ecumenical continental-wide bodies maintain indirect links with the World Council of Churches (in the case of MEC, with the World Federation of Christian Students). Since their respective constituencies and staff came originally from the membership of the type-B and -C churches (ULAJE, MEC and ISAL) or are *primarily* made up of the corporate membership of these churches and/or institutions related to them (CELADEC and UNELAM), it follows that they are the closest expression of the organized Protestant Ecumenical Movement in Latin America.

The foregoing can be further corroborated by the fact that since the Panamá Congress in 1916 by and large all the continental-wide Protestant gatherings that have been appearing in Latin America have revolved around the churches and continental Ecumenical organizations mentioned above. Of course, as will be pointed out in chapter IV, the last two of these meetings have seen an increasingly greater participation of Evangelical and Pentecostal-type churches and organizations. But, as will also be pointed out, many of the latter have been reluctant to participate (for theological and ecclesio-political reasons) and the influence of those who have participated has not been overwhelmingly significant.

This leads to the common, albeit not the most theologically sound, denominator of Mainline Protestantism: namely, the fact that the majority of the aforementioned churches and para-ecclesiastical organizations have been heretofore excluded from the categories of Evangelical (as witnessed to by CLADE-69) and Pentecostal Protestantism (as witnessed to by the reluctance shown by many

Latin American Pentecostal leaders to participate in a Pentecostal congress that UNELAM has been trying to organize since 1971). This negative common denominator, is, however, a relative one, as has been pointed out, because there are many that stand within Mainline-Protestantism and are also Evangelical and/or Pentecostal. But when everything is said and done, the sociological fact remains: heretofore Latin American Evangelicals and Pentecostals have not been willing to consider all Mainline Protestants (let alone their organizations) as representatives of their version of the Protestant Christian faith.

Each of these forms of Protestant Christianity, while overlapping one another, constitute a research universe of their own. This particular work will concentrate on the Mainline type, leaving treatment of the others for two subsequent studies.

### FOCUSING ON THE TARGET: MAINLINE PROTESTANTISM

Besides the practical limitation imposed by the insurmountable amount of available material, there are at least three reasons why I have selected Mainline Protestantism as the target for the present study. One of these is the historical role that Mainline Protestantism has played in the development of Latin American Protestant Christianity.

#### *Its Historical Role*

It is an accepted fact that Mainline Protestantism is the sector of Latin American Christianity that has contributed the most to the liberal-modernist project mentioned above. Of the Protestant contributors to education and health, Mainline denominations and organizations have been the most active, and certainly the pioneers.<sup>67</sup> In almost every Latin American country they have established hospitals, clinics and dispensaries. They have built schools and centers of higher learning. They have operated orphanages and

67. An exception to this is the case of the Latin America Mission in Costa Rica and the Regions Beyond Missionary Union and the Evangelical Union of South America in Perú (three "faith missions") which were socio-cultural Protestant pioneers in that they were among the first to found socio-cultural institutions and projects in their respective countries. On the latter, see Kessler, *Perú and Chile*, pp. 167ff.; on the former, see Wilton M. Nelson, *A History of Protestantism in Costa Rica* (Lucknow, India: Lucknow Publishing House, 1963).

day-care centers, relief and social-service agencies. They have sponsored agricultural and other development projects. With rare exceptions, all of these different diaconal ministries have set the pace for later Evangelical and/or Pentecostal participation in the social development of their countries.

Moreover, Mainline Protestantism constitutes the earliest and most forceful liberal-ideological interpretation of the Protestant Christian faith. Curiously enough, the strongest advocates of this view were non-Protestant liberal politicians. For them, Protestantism was synonymous with "democracy, freedom, moral uprightness, science and culture."<sup>68</sup> It represented a tremendous offensive against a backward, authoritarian and aristocratic Catholic clergy. These politicians thus sought to attract to their respective countries Protestant missions and immigrants.

The Protestantism they invited was Mainline (which, nevertheless, was permeated with strong Evangelical contingents). In this context, it is significant to note the invitations extended to Thompson in 1821 by Bernardo O'higgins, first President of Chile, and in 1822 by José de San Martín, liberator of Perú, to establish Lancastrian schools in these countries.<sup>69</sup> In Guatemala, the Presbyterians were personally invited to establish missionary work by the then President of the country, General Justo Rufino Barrios.<sup>70</sup> And in Ecuador, President Eloy Alfaro asked the Methodists to begin an educational project.<sup>71</sup> Elsewhere, the doors were opened to Protestant European migrants (type-B churches) partly in the belief that Protestant contingents would help to shape the virtues needed for the modernization of the various countries: "freedom of judgment, reliability, a pioneering and enterprising spirit, moral seriousness."<sup>72</sup>

This understanding of Protestant Christianity has been substantiated in varying degrees by numerous missionaries and Latin

68. Míguez-Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. 10.

69. Cf. González, *Historia*, pp. 358, 359; Kessler, *Perú and Chile*, p. 19ff.

70. Cf. Emilio Antonio Nuñez, "La influencia del cristianismo en el desarrollo histórico de Guatemala", Paper read at the Second Leadership Congress of the Alpha y Omega Movement of Guatemala, Quezaltenango, 19 December, 1974 (carbon copy), p. 12; Pablo Burgess, *Justo Rufino Barrios* (Guatemala: Editorial Universitaria de Guatemala, 1972), pp. 328-39; González, *Historia*, p. 391.

71. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 364.

72. Míguez-Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. 10.

American churchleaders. A good example is the following affirmation by the veteran Presbyterian missionary, W. Stanley Rycroft:

Christianity, with its emphasis on the worth of the individual and the freedom of the human spirit under the discipline of God is the surest foundation of the liberty and democracy for which Latin America yearns . . . That answer can only be given if the evangelical churches are willing to use all their resources and pres forward . . .<sup>73</sup>

Other evidence could be produced to substantiate our claim, such as, for instance, the fact that Mainline churches and organizations have produced by far the greatest number of Protestant leaders (and have influenced greatly the lives of many non-Protestant civic leaders<sup>74</sup>), and the relationship which existed between many pioneer missionaries and the Freemasons.<sup>75</sup> But this will suffice as evidence of the historical leadership of Mainline Protestantism.

### *Its Theological Influence*

To the historical role that Protestantism has played must be added the theological influence it has exercised. With two exceptions,<sup>76</sup> Mainline Protestantism has set the pace in top quality theological education. It has produced high level theological seminaries in such countries as Puerto Rico, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba and Mexico.<sup>77</sup> Through the assistance of the Theological Education

73. W. Stanley Rycroft, *Religion and Faith in Latin America* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), p. 10.

74. Cf., for example, the case of the British Belgian-born Frederick Crowe, forerunner of the Protestant missionary movement in Guatemala, who greatly influenced the liberal Guatemalan statesman, Lorenzo Montúfar. The latter received part of his education and many of his ideas from Crowe. Cf. González, *Historia*, p. 390; Kenneth G. Grubb, *Religion in Central America* (London: World Dominion Press, 1937), p. 61. See also Lorenzo Montúfar, *Un dualismo imposible* (Cristóbal, Zona del Canal de Panamá: Reproducido de *El centinela*, s.f.); and Juan C. Varetto, *Federico Crowe en Guatemala* (Buenos Aires: Junta Bautista de Publicaciones, 1940).

75. Cf., among other works, González, *Historia*, p. 381; and Kessler, *Perú and Chile*, p. 87.

76. The case of the Latin American Biblical Seminary (SBL) of San José, Costa Rica, sponsored originally by the Latin America Mission, and of the Central American Theological Seminary, sponsored by The Central America Mission.

77. In Puerto Rico, Union Seminary of Río Piedras; in Argentina, the Protestant Superior Institute of Theology (ISEDET) and the International Baptist Seminary

Fund (TEF) regional theological associations have been created, which stimulated the development of adequate research materials, faculties and criteria for evaluating and improving the quality of theological education.<sup>78</sup> It is interesting to note that the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) Movement, which in many ways has become an arm of Evangelicals around the world, is the direct product of a Mainline church: the Presbyterian Church of Guatemala.<sup>79</sup>

This is why Mainline Protestants have also set the pace in the field of theological literature. By far the most active and largest Protestant publishing firms are related to Mainline denominations and organizations. Any serious bibliographical listing of contemporary Latin American theological literature clearly shows that the overwhelming majority of Protestant theological works have been authored heretofore by representatives of the Mainline sector. Mainline Protestantism has not only set the pace as far as Protestant theology is concerned, but has provided, among other things, three of the leading voices in the emerging Latin American theology (Rubem Alves, José Míguez-Bonino and Luis Rivera Pagán), one of the leading church historians of Latin America (Justo L. González), one of the outstanding hymnodists of the Continent (Federico Pagura) and several contemporary leaders of the Ecumenical Movement (Emilio Castro, Leopoldo Nilus and Julio De Santa Ana, among others).

of Buenos Aires; in Brazil, among others, the Presbyterian seminaries of Campinas and Recife, the Methodist Theological Faculty in São Paulo, the Baptist seminaries of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Recife and the Lutheran seminaries of San Leopoldo and Porto Alegre; in Cuba, the Union Seminary of Matanzas; and in Mexico City, the Theological Community, the National Presbyterian Seminary, the National Baptist Seminary and the John Calvin Theological Seminary.

78. For an appreciation of the TEF's contribution to the regional associations, see its annual Progress Reports (1961-74). See also *Ministry in Context* (Bromley, Kent: TEF).

79. For information on TEE, see, among others, Ralph D. Winter, ed., *Theological Education by Extension* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1969); F. Ross Kinsler, "Extension: An Alternative Model for Theological Education," in *Learning in Context: The Search for Innovation Patterns in Theological Education* (Bromley, Kent: New Life Press, 1973), pp. 27ff; and Wayne Weld, *World Directory of Theological Education by Extension* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1973).

### *Its Crisis of Mission*

A third reason for zeroing in on the Mainline churches and organizations is the fact that it is among them that one first detects a crisis of mission. As Protestants become aware of their cultural alienation from the mainstream of society, their imported institutions, transplanted methods, imitative and repetitious theology and their conscious or unconscious alignment with neocolonial powers, they begin to question their traditional understanding of their nature and mission in Latin America and to reevaluate their performance. The crisis becomes obvious the moment groups like ISAL appear on the scene, and is highlighted by the participation of many church young people in the continental struggle of the 60's against oppressive foreign powers and local oligarchies. It is further strengthened by the awareness of the ideological manipulation of the faith for the maintenance of the *status quo*, and by the signs of renewal in the Catholic Church.

By the mid 70's it had become obvious that the fundamental question facing Latin American Protestantism was: "What is the nature and mission of the Church — not in abstract terms but in the concrete conditions of today's Latin America?"<sup>80</sup> Other related questions followed: "What is the particular mission of Protestantism *vis à vis* a Catholicism that has shed many of its more spurious forms and is progressively concentrating on Christ and the Scriptures?"<sup>81</sup> What is the particular role of Protestantism *vis à vis* a continent which either stands at the mercy of the vested interests of foreign capital and technical know-how or has entered a stage of "socio-economic transformation?"<sup>82</sup> How is salvation to be understood in such a situation? Where should Latin American Protestants place the point of gravity in terms of the unity of the church, of her pastoral, evangelistic, educational and diaconal tasks?

These are questions which are being asked not only by Mainliners

80. José Míguez-Bonino, "The Church in a Turbulent Latin America," in *This Month*, No. 6 (March, 1974), 3.

81. *Ibid.*

82. Cf. Francisco Rodés, "Relación Iglesia-Revolución," in *Mensaje* (Placeta, Las Villas, Cuba: Consejo de Iglesias Evangélicas de Cuba, 1974), 7. He states that "The fundamental weakness of the Cuban church is that it has not defined its relation to the socio-economic transformation that is called Revolution."

but also by Evangelicals and Pentecostals as well.<sup>83</sup> But they were first raised by the Mainline sector; and it is in that sector that the impact has been felt most severely.

To select Mainline Protestantism as the object of the present study is, thus, not only historically and theologically valid but also missiologically significant. Indeed, there is a correspondence between the awareness of a crisis in mission and the presence of a critical process of reflection. The crisis can only be detected if mission is accompanied by critical reflection. In the case of Latin American Protestants, this process first appeared on a broad scale among the Mainline churches and organizations. It is fitting, therefore, to study its development among them.

83. See, for example, Juan Carlos Ortíz, "Iglesia y sociedad," in Padilla, ed., *Latinoamérica hoy*, pp. 185ff.; in the same volume, Padilla, "Proyecto para una ética social evangélica," pp. 209ff. Interestingly, the Latin American Theological Fraternity has a full Commission on the Life and Mission of the Church which is planning a continental-wide consultation on "Unity and Mission in Latin America" for 1976.



## CHAPTER III

### CROSSROADS OF CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICA

#### *The Chronological Boundaries: 1969-1974*

This study is an attempt to analyze Latin American missiology as it has appeared in Mainline Protestantism during the period 1969-74. It is "a theology of the crossroads" not only because it focuses on that reflection which arises from a frontier-crossing event, but also because it is attentive to the continental crossroads amidst which Mainline Protestants have endeavored to participate in mission and reflect upon it. Thus the need to survey the global continental reality — the leading social, economic, political and religious issues, movements and events that made the period of study such a decisive moment in the history of Latin America.

#### SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CROSSROADS

Socially, economically and politically, the years 1969-1974 represent a convulsed epoch. Its turbulent character can be easily appreciated from the following impressionistic data.

#### *Impressionistic Data*

In 1970, the population of Spanish and Portuguese-speaking Latin America was 272,397 millions, increasing at an approximate annual rate of 2.62%. But with a total area of 19,991,803 km<sup>2</sup>, the density per km<sup>2</sup> was only 13.6. If the 1972 estimates of the United Nations turn out to be correct, by the end of 1975 there will be a total population of 326,833 millions, but with a density of only 16.3 per km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>1</sup>

Education-wise, Latin America presents a sad picture. "Out of every 10 Latin Americans, four are illiterates" and "of every 10

1. United Nations, *Statistical Yearbook*, 1972 (New York: Statistical Office of the United Nations, 1973).

children who begin school, only two ever finish.”<sup>2</sup> In 1970, only 76.6% of the 7-13 year old population was in primary school, 30.6% of the 14-19 year old population was in intermediate schools and only 6.5% of the population in the 20-24 year bracket was able to receive some form of superior education. Of the total population, 24.4% received no schooling whatever, and of the 76.6% that started, only 8.4% had any possibility of ever getting a higher education.<sup>3</sup>

The situation was no better in the area of health. While the average consumption of calories per inhabitant in 1970 was 2,525, eight countries consumed only 2,039 calories per inhabitant. In seven countries (with 28.3% of the total population) each inhabitant consumed less than 50 grams of protein daily, in seven others (with 47.4% of the population) between 50 and 65 and in the last six (with 32.8%) the average daily protein intake was respectively: 50-65 and more than 65.<sup>4</sup> If, as experts maintain,<sup>5</sup> a rich nourishing daily diet is one which has caloric value higher than 2,800 and contains 50 grams of protein, then Latin America, taken as a whole, has a deficient diet, and taken in segments, has very large sectors that are extremely undernourished.

In terms of available physicians per inhabitants, there was in 1969 an average of one doctor per 1,589 inhabitants.<sup>6</sup> The rate was far higher in El Salvador (3,919), Honduras (3,707), Guatemala (4,311), Dominican Republic (2,098), Bolivia (2,301), Chile (2,443), Colombia (2,161) and Ecuador (2,928).<sup>7</sup>

As for hospital facilities, there was during the same period an overall average of (not including Cuba and Puerto Rico) 3.1 hospital beds per 1,000 inhabitants.<sup>8</sup> The rate was even lower in the case of

2. “¿Control de los nacimientos? ”, *Actualidad pastoral*, VIII:75 (septiembre 1974), 172.

3. UN, *Yearbook*, 1972.

4. CEPAL, *América Latina y la estrategia internacional del desarrollo: Anexo* (Quito: Décimoquinto período de sesiones de la Comisión Económica para América Latina, ONU, 1973), pp. 25, 26.

5. See the work of the Centro Latinoamericano de Investigación en Ciencias Sociales, *Situación social de América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Solar/Harbette, 1969), p. 230, where the authors appeal to the data provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N.

6. CEPAL, *Anexo*, p. 21.

7. UN, *Yearbook*, 1972.

8. CEPAL, *Anexo*, p. 21.

Nicaragua (2.3), El Salvador (2.0), Honduras (1.71), Bolivia (1.9), Colombia (2.24), Ecuador (2.3), Perú (2.3) and Paraguay (1.5).<sup>9</sup>

Little wonder that there are so many deaths caused by gastrointestinal diseases, respiratory illnesses, pregnancy complications, diseases of early childhood and senility.<sup>10</sup> These are all diseases that do not require specialized hospitalization. They do require, however, adequate hospital and medical treatment.

The same pattern is readily observed in the field of housing: An average range of 1.4-1.7 persons per room; 75.2% of the urban population with pipe water, only between 17.3-21.7% in the case of the rural population; sewerage system for only 40% of the urban population; between 39.2-50% has access to electricity.<sup>11</sup>

We begin to note the socio-political roots of this pathetic picture the moment we enter into the field of economics. There is the agrarian situation.

95% of the land in Latin America is not in production and 5% poorly cultivated . . . 2% . . . own two thirds . . . of the land. Of every 10 Latin American peasants, eight do not have any land at all.<sup>12</sup>

Then there is the matter of personal income. In 1970, 10% of the total population of Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Venezuela earned 66% of the total personal income, 50% earned 24.6% and 20%, 5.1%. In the same year, there was in all of Latin America (but not counting Cuba and Puerto Rico) an average increase of 4.1% in the gross national per capita income, but the private consumer index per inhabitant, on constant prices, rose 4.3%.<sup>13</sup>

The picture gets worse when it comes to raw materials and foreign capital. "Latin America has one fourth of the forests of the world and the third part of the iron of the world . . . It has the greatest copper deposits."<sup>14</sup> It has large deposits of bauxite, molybdenum

9. UN, *Yearbook*, 1972.

10. Cf. Centro, *Situación social*, pp. 168, 194-196, where these are listed as the principal causes of deaths observed in Latin America during the years 1959-60. For more recent data, see Kenneth Ruddle and Donald Oderman, ed., *Statistical Abstract of Latin America, 1971* (Los Angeles: Latin American Center, UCLA, 1972), pp. 120, 121.

11. CEPAL, *Anexo*, pp. 27, 28.

12. "Control," p. 171.

13. CEPAL, *Anexo*, p. 11.

14. "Control," *Ibid.*

and petroleum. But it suffers greatly from the drainage of capital and the disequilibrium between raw materials and industrialized products. There are "1,500 million dollars taken annually by foreign investors. Every year Latin America loses between two and three million dollars with the disequilibrium between raw materials and industrialized products."<sup>15</sup>

The convulsed meaning of this situation becomes immediately apparent the moment it is compared with that of 25 years ago. In a report of the UN published in 1952, the following facts were noted:

\*Two thirds, if not more, of the Latin American population are physically undernourished to the point of starvation in some regions.

\*Three-fourths of the population in several of the Latin American countries are illiterate; in the others, from 20 to 60 percent.

\*One-half of the Latin American population are suffering from infections or deficiency diseases.

\*About one-third of the Latin American working population continue to remain outside the economic, social, and cultural pace of the Latin American community. The consuming power of the Latin American Indian is in many areas almost nil . . .

\*An overwhelming majority of the Latin American agricultural population is landless. Two thirds, if not more, of the agricultural, forest, and livestock resources of Latin America are owned or controlled by a handful of native landlords and foreign corporations.

\*Most of the extractive industries in Latin America are owned or controlled by foreign corporate investment, a considerable portion of the profits being taken out of the various countries. In like fashion, many of the institutions of production and distribution in Latin America are controlled by absentee foreign capital.

\*Living conditions for the bulk of the Latin America population are particularly unstable, being dependent on the fluctuations of the foreign market. Concentration on one extractive industry or on monocultural production . . . for foreign consumption . . . has brought many areas to the verge of economic ruin . . .<sup>16</sup>

It is obvious that the concrete socio-economic situation of Latin America has changed very little in the last 25 years. This more than any other factor accounts for the socio-political unrest, turbulence

15. *Ibid.*

16. Extracted from United Nations, *Informe preliminar sobre la situación social del mundo* (New York: UN Publications, 1952) as quoted by Míguez-Bonino, *Doing Theology*, pp. 22, 23.

and convulsion that has been witnessed in the present decade. Let us trace the main events, movements and/or trends of the last six years.

### *Main Events, Movements and/or Trends*

*The collapse of the Alliance for Progress.* The 60's will be remembered in Latin American history as the shortlived era of development. It began with the optimistic launching of the Alliance for Progress in 1961. It ended with its collapse.

The whole project was based on the developmentalistic approach noted in the previous chapter. The aim of the Alliance for Progress was to help the socio-economic development of Latin America through private investments from the USA in the development of an integrated industrial economy and the financial help of the North American government for public works, agricultural and educational development projects. But its failure to generate an autonomous economy, the shallowness of the social reform projects it helped finance plus the unmasking of its covert imperialistic foundation by the analyses not only of "independent" Marxist social scientists, but of entities like the UN's Commission for Latin America (CEPAL), demolished its influential role in the mainstream of Latin American society.<sup>17</sup> This is another way of saying that its basic weakness lay in the very theory on which it was based.

Míguez-Bonino has succinctly summarized the fallacy of this theory. He points out that its basic weakness lies in the fact that it is grounded on

an unhistorical and mechanistic analysis (dependent on functionalist sociology) which makes at least three fundamental mistakes. The first is to believe that history is unilinear and that a society can move to previous stages of other existing societies. As a matter of fact, all societies move in a parallel and interrelated way. The 'take off point' in Northern societies was dependent on the relation to the then colonized societies. That situation does not obtain today and the process therefore cannot be repeated. Secondly, the model did not take into account the political factors: there is an 'effect of demonstration' which moves the masses to demand participation in wealth and welfare, and therefore the 'slave labor' that was available in the early stages of the developed societies cannot be obtained today – hence social unrest and repression. Thirdly, the theory took for granted that the

17. For a more detailed critical summary of the Alliance for Progress, see Gutiérrez, *Liberation*, pp. 21 ff.; Míguez-Bonino, *Doing Theology*, pp. 24 ff.

developed countries were the 'normal' model for the underdeveloped. As the process continues, the third world becomes less and less attracted by the quality of life and the nature of the North Atlantic societies.<sup>18</sup>

*The Disintegration of the Christian Democratic Movement.* Parallel to the failure of the Alliance for Progress and its developmental theory came the disintegration of the Christian Democratic Movement (CDM) and the collapse of the ideology of "the third way" as a viable alternative to the dilemma of Latin America.

The history of the CDM is a rather interesting one because it marks the long political pilgrimage of many Catholic Christians. Founded in the 30's as a result of the Catholic Church's abandonment of its traditional alliance with conservative political parties in favor of indirect social activities, it remained "an ideology of minorities" until 1964.<sup>19</sup> In that year, Eduardo Frei led the Chilean CD to an electoral victory with his "revolution in liberty" platform. In 1968, Rafael Caldera of Venezuela became the second Latin American CD President (with 29% of the votes). One year later, a radical wing in the Chilean CD broke off and organized a new party (MAPU) that joined Salvador Allende's Popular Unity coalition and its "on the way to Socialism" approach. With the help of MAPU, Allende was elected President in 1970. The Chilean CD was demoralized. A year later it suffered another split. Three years later it collaborated with the military and right-wing sector in the overthrow of Allende's constitutional government. In 1974, COPEY (the Venezuelan CD) was voted out of office.

According to José Comblin, the collapse of the CD was due to the fallacy of its presuppositions. Like Dussel, he locates its intellectual origin in the rise of the Catholic Action Movement in the 30's with its distinction between direct and indirect social action.<sup>20</sup> This allowed the Church gradually to disassociate itself from conservative political parties and take up instead the task of setting up social organisms to implement its Social Doctrine. The latter revolves around the notion of a specifically Christian alternative to

18. *Ibid.*, p. 26. Cf. also Gonzalo Arroyo, "Pensamiento latinoamericano sobre subdesarrollo y dependencia externa," *Fe cristiana*, pp. 305ff.; *Idem.*, "Consideraciones sobre el subdesarrollo de América Latina," *Ibid.*, pp. 232ff.

19. Dussel, *Historia*, p. 270.

20. José Comblin, "Movimientos e ideologías en América Latina," in *Fe cristiana*, p. 122.

contemporary society, an alternative which is neither populist-nationalistic (e.g. the Mexican Revolution) nor Marxist. The idea then is for the Church to give a social-action outlet to its faithful and channel them away from non-Christian movements (and ideologies) into Church-oriented efforts.<sup>21</sup>

Out of these efforts, the CD was born. It traces its roots directly to the Catholic Action Movement of the 30's and to the Social Doctrine of the Church.

From its formation in the Catholic Action, [the CD] kept the idea of the specificity of the social doctrine of the church before all populisms and against all Marxist infiltration, 'intrinsically perverse' according to the doctrine of the Popes. [It also kept] the autonomy in practice of political parties and the responsibility of the laity. [It received] from the social doctrine of the church a global generous inspiration in view of profound social reforms. The idea that between capitalism and socialism there exists a third way and that the role of the Christian Democracy is the realization of the third way is predominant.<sup>22</sup>

But as Catholic Christians come "in contact with real history," adds Comblin, they

discover that a third way does not exist, that the Christian Democracy does not even have any specificity and that it is another very limited populist movement in its expansion, that the mandate is a motive of conflict with the hierarchy, that the distinction between direct and indirect action is precarious.<sup>23</sup>

21. For the historical roots of the Social Doctrine of the Church, see the encyclical of Leo XII *Rerum Novarum* (1891) which initiates the modern social *magisterium* tradition. This is followed by other Pontifical encyclicals: *Quadragesimo anno* (1931); *Mater et magistra* (1962); *Pacem in terris* (1963); *Populorum progressio* (1967) and other relevant documents, such as *Gaudium et spes* (Vatican II) and *Octagesima adveniens* (Cf. Fermin Muñoz, *Las encíclicas del mundo moderno* (Barcelona: Editorial Bruguera, (1967)). Victorio Araya (*Fe cristiana y marxismo: Una perspectiva latinoamericana* (San José: Editorial Territorio, 1974), p. 122) has rightly commented: "This social teaching is . . . *circumstantial* (born out of concrete situations) and *doctrinal* (it is kept in the plane of principles, without descending to the plane of historico-political mediations . . .)." Cf. also Angel Torres Calvo, "Doctrina social católica," in *Diccionario de textos sociales pontificios* (Madrid: Compañía Bibliográfica Española, 1962), pp. 684-696.

22. Comblin, "Movimientos e ideologías," p. 123.

23. *Ibid.*,

The triumph of the Chilean DC in 1964 constitutes the end of an era. For while it represents a revolutionary appeal, "its lukewarm results" reveal that it was not revolutionary enough.<sup>24</sup> The situation called for a greater radicality. The emergence of MAPU (Movement of United Popular Action) and the election of Allende marks "a movement to the left" of which Camilo Torres, a reformist turned revolutionary, had been "a paradigm."<sup>25</sup> A new Catholic vanguard appeared which did not insist on a specifically Christian alternative, but rather accepted those alternatives which served best the cause of the majorities. The Social Doctrine of the Church was "no longer [to be] understood as a factor of separation, but as a reference that can be translated in the language of all."<sup>26</sup> Together with its Protestant counterpart, this "new breed"<sup>27</sup> of Catholic Christians adopted "the revolutionary problematic imposed by the new situation."<sup>28</sup>

✓ *The impact of the Cuban Revolution.* This new situation had been brought into the open by the most decisive event in modern Latin American history: the triumph of the Cuban Revolution (1959). Its significance lies in the fact that it represents the first authentic successful *Latin American* interpretation of Marxist theory. Its authenticity stems from the fact that it grew out of a concrete historical situation, outside of the main Marxist stream (the Cuban Communist Party, which did not participate in the Cuban Revolution), has managed to interpret Marxist-Leninist theory in the light of Cuban history and culture<sup>29</sup> and has forced a redefinition, at least in Latin America, of what constitutes a real Marxist: not necessarily one who is a member of the Party, but active participation in the making of a Marxist revolution.<sup>30</sup>

24. Dussel, *Historia*, p. 271.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Comblin, *Ibid.*

27. Cf. Míguez-Bonino, *Doing Theology*, pp. 1 ff.

28. Comblin, *Ibid.*

29. On this matter, see the interesting article which appeared in the *International Herald Tribune* on the occasion of the visit of USA Senators Jacob Javits and Clairborne Pell to Cuba: David Binder, "Cuba gives Marxism a Latin Impulse: Fervor Embarrasses Soviet and East European Communists," in *International Herald Tribune* (October 5-6, 1974), pp. 1, 2.

30. Cf. Comblin, "Movimientos e ideologías," p. 119. Cf. also Fidel Castro's famous statement: "Who will make the revolution in Latin America? The people, the revolutionaries, with or without the Party." In Régis Debray, *Ensayos sobre América Latina* (México: Ediciones Era, 1969), p. 234.



Of course, the failure of the guerrilla movements during the 60's which were openly supported by Cuba, brought into question the so-called "focus theory"<sup>31</sup> of Cuban Marxism. This theory holds that ---

1. a revolutionary army is capable of defeating a regular army; 2. there is no reason for waiting for revolutionary conditions to start the revolution, the insurrectionist focus creates and forces revolutionary conditions to appear; 3. the fundamental ground of the struggle is the countryside.<sup>32</sup>

With the failure of the rural guerrillas, highlighted by the death of Ernesto Che Guevara, it seemed as if the Cuban influence in Latin America was waning quite rapidly. However, the visits of Castro to Chile and Perú, the overthrow of Allende, the seemingly tactical abandonment by Castro of his open policy of exporting the Cuban revolutionary experience, the restoration of diplomatic ties between Cuba and several Latin American countries --- all of these things have placed the Cuban model once again in the forefront. It not only represents the sole successful Marxist revolution in the Americas but also an important original contribution to Marxist theory and practice and a symbol of Latin American independence and indigeneity.

*The resurgence of nationalism.* The Cuban Project, however, while being a decisive force in the current situation is by no means the only significant political trend. Nationalism proper has become an equally important force in the contemporary history of Latin America. For it has brought together large sectors of the Continent in a joint effort against national oligarchies, their political representatives and foreign economic interests.

Generally speaking, Nationalism is a politico-ideological movement that has sought to restore the notion of peoplehood (identity) through the rediscovery of indigenous culture, the redistribution of the land (agrarian reform) and the nationalization of natural resources. In recent years, it has taken at least three different forms.

There is the old Nationalistic-Populism of Mexico. It is old because for half a century it has remained the leading ideology of Mexico. And it is populist, because it has kept a formal alliance of the popular contingents, including the army, in a national struggle

31. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 44ff.

32. Comblin, "Movimientos e ideologías," p. 114.

against the oligarchies, the Catholic Church, and foreign enterprises.

Another form is that of National-Populistic-Peronism, which has played such an important role in Argentine politics.<sup>33</sup> It is represented by Peronism, which in recent years united the Argentine popular contingents in a common struggle against the ruling military oligarchy in the hope of reviving the "prosperous" economic years of the old Peronist era and the course of social reforms it introduced. But with the repressive actions taken by Perón during the last months of his life against the leftist faction of his *Justicialismo* Movement, Peronism began to disintegrate quite rapidly. It is now doubtful that it will be able to provide an effective solution for the serious economic and political problems confronting Argentine society. It is even questionable whether it will be able to remain in power for much longer.

There is a third, seemingly more radical, form of Nationalism that could be designated leftist. In many ways, it was represented in Allende's "on the way to socialism" program.<sup>34</sup> It is also represented by the leftist faction of Peronism, the Uruguyan United Front (defeated and outlawed by Bordaberry), the majority of Puerto Rican independent parties and other scattered national movements. The ideology of leftist Nationalism integrates traditional populist notions into a program oriented toward the formation of a socialist system. Thus far, however, it has not proven very successful, especially, in the light of the demolition of its most prestigious model: the Chilean one.

✓ *The emergence of Militarism.* Finally, the present decade has been affected by Militarism. Though Latin America has an old military tradition, it is only in recent years that the military forces have become a strong ideological movement.<sup>35</sup> Of course, it is the most

33. On this, see among others, Juan Pablo Franco, "Conducción estratégica y movilización popular: Artífices del triunfo electoral del 11 de marzo" and Rodolfo Puiggrós, "Peronismo y Socialismo," both in *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, XI:34, 55 (1973), pp. 5-25, 26-58.

34. For a recent, authoritative, although not necessarily objective, analysis of the program of the Chilean Popular Unity, see Arturo Saenz Chatterton and Raimundo Santos Costa, "La via chilena al socialismo" (San José: CEDAL, 1974), (mimeographed). Also, Hugo Zemelman, "El nudo gordiano de la via chilena al socialismo," in *Nueva Sociedad* (enero-febrero de 1974), pp. 3-37.

35. For an analysis of the traditional role and the most recent developments in the Latin American Armed Forces (not including the Chilean case and the

heterogeneous of all ideological movements. Nevertheless, it has a common root: the political vocation of the Latin American Armed Forces. This vocation has taken many different shapes, ranging from guaranteeing the economic interests of the traditional oligarchy or dictator, through the defense of the "constitution" and the preservation of law and order, "traditional values" and the system of "free enterprise," to the promotion and administration of profound structural changes and/or the creation of the necessary conditions for a social revolution. In contemporary Latin America, there are at least three military ideological models.

There is, first, the industrial-military model of Brazil, which has the strong backing of the Pentagon and the CIA.<sup>36</sup> Comblin calls it the ideology of "national security."<sup>37</sup> It brings together the international military crusade of the USA against Communism and the concern of the Brazilian army over "the disintegration of civilian power and its incapacity to fight against Communism."<sup>38</sup> In this context, the army has taken direct control of the political affairs of the nation as its supreme moral force and assumed the task of guiding and directing national development in order to meet the final military, and therefore political, objective: to expose and destroy the false claims and pretexts of the leftist forces of subversion and thereby block the possibility of seducing the masses.

In order to secure social tranquillity and hold back the forces of international communism, a fearful repressive apparatus has been introduced. Any possibility of subversion is thus quenched. This has also made possible the continued, undisturbed economic alliance between the multinational corporations and the new national managerial class, which stimulated impressive economic growth but has not fostered equitable distribution or been able to do anything about the fantastic rate of inflation.

Beyond its politico-economic success, the industrial-Militarism of

comeback of Perón), see the essays by Carlos Fayt, Klaus Linderberg and Norberto Ceresole in *Cambios sociopolíticos en las Fuerzas Armadas* (San José: CEDAL, 1972).

36. See, for example, among others, Victor Marchetti and John Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* (London: CAPE, 1974) and "The CIA's New Bay of Bucks," in *Newsweek* (September 23, 1974), pp. 12f.

37. Comblin, "Movimientos e ideologías," p. 112.

38. *Ibid.*

Brazil has put its military bosses and their business allies, with the blessing of the USA, on the road to becoming a small world power, responsible for the oversight of South America: witness its increasing influence in Bolivia (whose previous government it helped overthrow), Uruguay, Paraguay and Chile.

The Peruvian situation makes Latin American Militarism, however, a paradoxical reality. For whereas in Brazil the military have organized their political power along fascist lines, in Perú the military have become a Populist revolutionary force.<sup>39</sup> A radically new military ideology has been therefore introduced in Latin America. Thus far, it has been tested in Bolivia, Ecuador and Perú, but has only made a significant social impact in the latter.

Taking over the program that the previous social democratic government was unable to carry out, the Peruvian military has nationalized the petroleum industry, enacted cooperative agrarian reform, nationalized communications, the banking system and significant areas of foreign commerce, brought about a total reformation of the educational system, passed a vigorous general law for industries and mining and created a system of popular mobilization.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, it has joined other Latin American nations, like Mexico, Argentina and Panama, in challenging the political hegemony of the USA in Latin American affairs and calling for the end of the Cuban blockade.

Then there is, finally, the militaristic ideology of the guerrilla movements. Basically Marxist in their orientation, these movements have followed more or less the Cuban "focus theory," concentrating their action in the rural areas.<sup>41</sup> But after the death of Ernesto Che Guevara in Bolivia and the successful offensive of the regular Vene-

39. For an authoritative study of this ideological phenomenon, see Aníbal Quijano, *Nacionalismo, neoimperialismo y militarismo en el Perú* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Periferia, 1971).

40. Norberto Ceresole, "La revolución permanente en el Perú," in *Cambios sociopolíticos*, p. 41.

41. For an interpretation of the guerrilla military doctrine, see, in addition to Debray's work (mentioned above), Ernesto Che Guevara, *Obra revolucionaria* (México: Ediciones Era, 1967) and *La revolución latinoamericana* (Córdova: Editorial Encuadre, 1973). For a succinct analysis of the guerrilla movement up to 1968, especially from the Colombian perspective, see Orlando Fals Borda, *Las revoluciones inconclusas en América Latina, 1809-1968* (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1971), pp. 47ff.

zuelan and Colombian armies, their activities came to a virtual halt, the only possible exception being the Guatemalan guerillas who continue sporadic operations. The guerrilla movement reappeared in the River Plate Republics in the late 60's, but suffered a setback in Uruguay with the repressive offensive of the Uruguayan Armed Forces against the Tupamaros. By the end of 1974, their only significant ground of action was in Argentina.

## RELIGIOUS CROSSROADS

### *The Second General Episcopal Conference (Medellín)*

In addition to its social, economic and political relevance, the 1969-74 period is also pregnant with religious importance. For one thing, it stands under the shadow of Medellín, one of the most important events, if not the most important, in the history of Latin American Christianity. The relevance of this event can be succinctly summarized along the following general lines.

1. Medellín marks the official recognition of the end of an era and the beginning of a new. The words of the Papal Nuncio at the outset of the International Eucharistic Congress which preceded the Medellín Conference, are equally applicable to the latter:

the Congress concludes an era begun with the colonization of Latin America, with fierce and radical Catholic religiosity, and opens a new era nourished by the spirit of the II Vatican Council, singularly attentive to the profound exigencies of the Gospel.<sup>42</sup>

This new era was dramatically symbolized by the visit of the Pope: the first time in history that a Pope visited the most Catholic continent in the world and the only "Christian" area of the Third World.

It was further dramatized by the presence at the Conference of representatives from the non-Catholic churches. For the first time, the Latin American Catholic hierarchy officially recognized the Protestant and Orthodox Christian presence in the Continent. More significant still is "the intercommunion that was extended on 5 September to separated brethren from other Christian Churches and observers of the Conference."<sup>43</sup>

42. Dussel, *Historia*, p. 179.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

But Medellín's most unique characteristic is the fact that the Latin American Catholic hierarchy publically committed itself to the missionary challenge of the hour, not from an abstract and detached position, but in terms of the concrete reality. In this sense, it is significant to note the methodology that is followed in its main documents: (1) analysis of the situation, (2) theological foundation and (3) pastoral implications. Equally significant is the order in which the documents appear: (1) human promotion, (2) evangelization and growth in the faith and (3) the visible church and its structures.<sup>44</sup> In other words, there was a correspondence between methodology and content. A new theological maxim was thus introduced which would have a profound significance in the theology of the seventies: the way of doing theology profoundly alters its end product.

2. Medellín highlighted a developing tension between Reformists and Revolutionaries, or between a church that was becoming increasingly conscious of the situation but thought that it could "go at it slowly" (or perhaps was simply afraid to go too quickly for fear of the repercussions) and a church that was not only aware of the situation but also felt compelled to take immediate and radical steps. This tension may be observed at several levels.

On the highest hierarchical-structural level, it can be seen in the role played by the Vatican, initially via the CAL (the Vatican's Commission for Latin America) and later via the speeches of the Pope himself. The pressure exerted by the CAL is shown by the way it sought to influence the appointment of expositors and consultants: it forced an increase in the number of the former from four to eight and vetoed as unacceptable the names of several of the proposed consultants, among whom was Gonzalo Arroyo, later to become the leader of the Christians for Socialism Movement.<sup>45</sup> Pope Paul tried to exert pressure as well by urging restraint and caution; among other things, he criticized those theologians and Christian thinkers who having abandoned the church's "*philosophia perennis*," introduced "into the field of the faith a spirit of subversive criticism . . ."<sup>46</sup> He also exhorted Latin American peasants "not to

44. Cf. CELAM, *Medellín II*, pp. 7, 8.

45. Dussel, *Historia*, p. 180.

46. His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, "Opening Address to Latin American Bishops' Conference," in *Medellín II*, p. 23.

put their trust in violence or revolution" for "such an attitude is contrary to the Christian spirit and can also delay rather than foster social elevation."<sup>47</sup> Dussel, commenting on the Pope's speeches, has rightly said that they "sounded to the ears of the Latin American people . . . like a call to the patience of the poor." This, he adds, "produced an immediate moment of reprieve to the rich and oppressors."<sup>48</sup>

On the strictly Latin American level, the tension was dramatically illustrated by two significant incidents. The first was the parallel conference that was held in a nearby "drug store" by some 200 students and workers to discuss the problems and issues that were being debated by the bishops. The other was the fact that the conclusions of the Conference "were made public before they were definitely approved by Rome."<sup>49</sup>

Both these incidents highlight a *new Catholic consciousness*. A new critical attitude had settled and taken root in the collective conscience of important sectors of the Church. Hierarchical, absolutistic authority had begun to be openly questioned.<sup>50</sup> The concrete situation had emerged as a fundamental criterion of validation. The faithful had begun to refuse a passive role. They began to demand participation in the analytical process; to challenge the Church's authorities to be concrete, pertinent, faithful to the needs of the majorities and the demands of the gospel.

The hierarchy also appeared to have gained a new critical frame of mind, refusing to relegate to Rome the responsibility for the interpretation and evaluation of the Latin American reality and the development of new guidelines to meet the missionary challenge of the hour. While accepting the insights brought by the Pope, they not only did not hesitate to use their own critical interpretative judgment but also tried to set up a specifically Latin American plan of action. In so doing, they too insisted on the concrete situation as a fundamental missiological point of reference.

3. The foregoing has given us a preview of some of the major

47. As quoted by Dussel, *Historia*, p. 179.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

50. For an appreciation of the critical consciousness of the laity in relation to Medellín, see the various documents compiled in *Iglesia latinoamericana, ¿Protesta o profecía?* and *Between Honesty and Hope*.

results of the Conference. Segundo Galilea has summarized them as follows:

- a) The [Catholic] Church in Latin American acquired for the first time a collective consciousness of its original identity and its own pastoral vocation. *The feeling of a Latin American local church is born.* And with that, the conviction that autochthonous pastoral orientations and paths must be found.
- b) '*Official*' Latin American Christianity entered into History. It reconciled itself in principle with the ideologies and social movements that are shaping the future of the Continent . . .
- c) . . . the Church became conscious [of the fact] that it must find *other forms of incarnating itself in the Latin American reality* and truly becoming a servant . . .  
This new form of 'Latin American incarnation' was translated into a *tendency to de-institutionalize many aspects of the Church* . . .
- d) In short, the Church obtained a sharper consciousness of its *prophetic mission* in the present historical moment: a mission that is conceived of as the transmission of a great evangelical mystique to the mighty movement of liberation, as a prophetic denunciation of all attempts that try to impede the integral vocation of the Latin American man, and as a disinterested promotion of everything that fosters it.<sup>51</sup>

We must forego an immediate reference to the paradox of Medellín; *i.e.*, its other face, the negative results. Further on several remarks will be made in relation to these results, especially in the light of the prophetic inertia that has characterized CELAM and the national episcopal conferences in the 70's.<sup>52</sup> For the moment, it suffices to state, with Comblin, that the overall significance of Medellín lies in the fact that it marked a "spiritual moment" in the history of the Latin American Catholic Church.

Beyond the particular projects that the bishops wanted to authenticate, there was in Medellín a spiritual intention of greater depth and a more permanent scope. There was the will to go beyond the established, to search for contact and encounter with a new world, a world still uncivilized, a young continent remaining un-Christianized.<sup>53</sup>

51. Galilea, *Reflexiones*, pp. 11-13.

52. For critical comments on the significance of Medellín in terms of the historical situation of Latin America during the 70's see chapters IV and V.

53. José Comblin, "Medellín: Problemas de interpretación," in PASOS, No. 64 (20 de agosto de 1973), p. 3.



### *The Theology of Liberation*

The most impressive and original, albeit indirect, product of Medellín was the Theology of Liberation. Though it was not until 1970 that it began to take shape as a definitive theological movement, it is generally agreed that its major stimulus came from several reflection groups that grew out of the inspiration of Medellín.<sup>54</sup>

As far as Latin America is concerned, the Theology of Liberation is without doubt the most unique theological happening of the seventies. It has not only brought a fresh approach to the theological task but has also introduced new categories into the theological discourse and has altered the course of political, ecumenical and missionary theology. For it has put the accent on praxis rather than on abstract theory.

Though it was initiated in Catholic theological circles, it was not long before it gained the interest and attention of Protestant avant-gard groups like ISAL and theologians like Rubem Alves and José Míguez-Bonino. Curiously enough, the former is recognized as the first to have introduced "the basic questions of a 'Theology of Liberation'"<sup>55</sup> to the world, while the latter has written one of its clearest and most informative interpretations in the English language.

In the course of our discussion, we shall have to deal at length with the Theology of Liberation. This is so because it is an ecumenical theology, a good portion of which was developed within Latin American Protestant circles. ISAL has played a significant role in its development as promotor and catalytic nucleus, and CELADEC has oriented its educational efforts along the lines of its methodology and basic questions. In this context it is interesting to observe how the language of liberation has penetrated into other sectors of Main-line Protestantism, such as churches, church-oriented theological consultations, research projects and publications.

54. For a historical account of the origins of the Theology of Liberation and most representative bibliographical references, see among others Míguez-Bonino, *Doing Theology*, pp. 61ff., 175ff.; Hugo Assmann, *Teología desde la praxis de la liberación* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1973), pp. 36ff.; and my *The Church*, pp. 220ff. See also the Escorial and CELAM simposia, *Fe cristiana* (above) and *Liberación: diálogos en el CELAM* (Bogotá: CELAM, 1974).

55. Hugo Assmann, *Opresión-liberación: desafío a los cristianos* (Montevideo: Tierra Nueva, 1970), p. 79.

### *The Christians for Socialism Movement*

If Medellín gave the Theology of Liberation its initial impulse, the First Latin American Encounter of Christians for Socialism held in Santiago, Chile in April 1972, gave it its credentials. This has been underscored by Giulio Girardi in his comparison between Medellín and Santiago. Among other things, he states:

Medellín was an expression of continental-wide episcopal collegiality. Santiago is also a continental-wide expression of the grass-roots Christian community . . .

Medellín felt the need to make an ecumenical gesture of intercommunication . . . In Santiago, Catholics and Protestants alternate without distinction and no thought is given to the need for an ecumenical gesture . . . Christians are never so united as they are the moment they stop talking about unity and begin to work together in the unity of the world.

In Santiago, like Medellín, theologians are present. In Medellín they were summoned by the bishops (in the measure that Rome permitted it), in Santiago by the militants. It is notable that in certain cases [The theologians in Santiago were the same as those of] Medellín. In Medellín, the theologians had to elaborate texts that could be taken up by the bishops. In Santiago, they had to elaborate texts that could be taken up by grass-roots revolutionary Christians.<sup>56</sup>

This emphasis on praxeological collegiality and ecumenicity coupled with an interdisciplinary theological reflection of and for militant Christians openly committed to socialism made the Santiago gathering a fundamental moment in the historical development of the Theology of Liberation. Little wonder, then, that Míguez-Bonino begins his interpretative analysis of the latter with a reference to Santiago. "A consideration of the nature, mood and conclusions of this meeting," he says, "is an excellent point of departure for a discussion of what is happening today in Christianity in general and in theological reflection in particular" in Latin America.<sup>57</sup> For his part, Victorio Araya has referred to Santiago as an indispensable point of reference for his own study on the significant relation of "faith, ideology and politics" in the socio-cultural context of Latin America, which he sees as being the basic concern of the Theology of

56. Giulio Girardi, "Los cristianos y el socialismo: De Medellín a Santiago," trans. from the French original, *Le Monde* (May 7-8, 1972), in *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, X:33-34 (3a/4a Entregas, 1972), 104-105.

57. Míguez-Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. xxii.

Liberation.<sup>58</sup> And it is widely recognized that Santiago went beyond Medellín in terms of theological methodology,<sup>59</sup> socio-economic-political analysis<sup>60</sup> and impact.<sup>61</sup>

The inspiration of the Santiago Encounter is found in the endeavors of numerous national and continental reflection-action groups, such as Priests for the Third World (Argentina), ONIS (Perú), Golconda (Colombia), ISAL and the Chilean Secretariat of Christians for Socialism. It was the latter, however, that served as the principal catalyst. Organized in 1971 during a gathering of 80 priests who lived and worked in populous areas of Chile and had openly opted — as Christians committed to the liberation of their fellow-human beings — for socialism as the only way to bring about a more just Chilean society, the Secretariat hosted the continental gathering. It was no coincidence, therefore, that the latter was described as an encounter of Christians engaged in a common human struggle for a socialist society.<sup>62</sup>

58. Araya, *Fe cristiana*, p. 19.

59. Cf. Míguez-Bonino, *Ibid.*, p. xxiii, where he states: "The concreteness of the questions posed and the answers sought, even in the most theoretical subjects, created a quite new relation between the intellectual stars and the rest of the meeting. Affirmations, however brilliant or clever, were supposed to be tested against everyday experience. The meeting had no patience with the classic game of posing an abstract question in order to fit a theoretical answer which one has already developed. It had first to be convinced that the question itself represented a real problem, the solution of which was demanded by a concrete and active engagement."

60. This was highlighted by, among other things, the following factors: (1) the importance given to the national reports, which put the accent on the concrete social, economic and political reality; (2) the consistent (ideologically defined) analytical line of the Santiago documents (especially the final one) in contrast to the ideologico-analytical disparities that can be witnessed between the major documents of Medellín (e.g., the documents on Justice and Peace); (3) the wider participation in the analytical task, which gave Santiago a broader range of insights. Cf. the Santiago documents: *Cristianos por el socialismo: Primer encuentro latinoamericano; texto de la edición internacional* (Santiago: Mundo Nuevo, 1972); *Cristianos por el socialismo: Exigencias de una opción* (Montevideo: Tierra Nueva, 1973).

61. Cf. "Noticia bibliográfica sobre la repercusión del encuentro de Santiago," *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, Nros. 33-34, 15-18. See also Paul Hofman, "Leftist Group is Criticized by Holy See: Vatican is Alarmed by Growing Faction," *International Herald Tribune* (May 6, 1975), p. 5.

62. Cf. "Del social cristianismo al cristianismo revolucionario" in *Cristia-*

The importance of the Santiago meeting is many-faceted. For one thing, it constituted a serious blow to the Christian Democratic Movement. Not only was it hosted by a group which, together with the second rebel faction of the Chilean CD (the Christian Left), had severely criticized and broken with the ideology of the "third way" but it also vividly demonstrated the definitive rejection by militant Christians from the whole Continent of the Christian Democratic Movement and of the dualism of the Social Doctrine of the Church. This is why the Chilean CD reacted so vehemently against the meeting and the Christians for Socialism Movement which it sparked, calling it a Marxist-integrationist effort.<sup>63</sup>

Santiago also served as a corrective to the ambiguity of Medellín. While the latter had made a strong effort to come out in favor of the cause of liberation, its statements were tinted by reformist language. This explains the disparities between the document on Justice and that on Peace.<sup>64</sup> Santiago was meant to purge the cause of liberation from the traces of the "third way," and therefore placed the accent on socialism. A middle-of-the-road position was no longer possible. Christians had to be precise in their political options. Socialism was considered to be the only project that adequately responded to (1) the commitment of the gospel to the poor and the downtrodden and (2) the concrete situation of Latin America. It is no surprise, therefore, that the Chilean hierarchy, led by the Cardinal of Santiago, decided not to have anything to do with the Meeting,<sup>65</sup> and that since then the Christians for Socialism Movement has come under severe attack from the Vatican.<sup>66</sup>

For Protestants, the Meeting and the Movement were very significant. Not only was there an avant-guard Mainline Protestant

*nos por el socialismo: ¿Consecuencia cristiana o alienación política?*, Instituto de Estudios Políticos, ed. (Santiago: Editorial El Pacífico, 1972), p. 198. See also *Cristianos latinoamericanos y socialismo* (Bogotá: CEDIAI, 1972, *passim*.)

63. See, especially, Claudio Orrego Vicuña, "Los marxistas cristianos o la nostalgia del integrismo," in *¿Alienación política?*, pp. 399. Cf. the critical response from Hugo Assmann, José Blanes, Luis Bach, "Las exigencias de una opción," *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, Nros. 33-34, 40ff.

64. For a comparative analysis of these two documents, see José Míguez-Bonino, "El nuevo catolicismo," in Padilla, ed., *Latinoamérica hoy*, pp. 92f.

65. Cf. CEDIAI, *Cristianos*, pp. 201ff.

66. Cf. Hofman, "Holy See" (above); Aldo Comba, "New Moves in the Italian Churches," *One World*, No. 5 (April 1975), 18.

organization directly involved in it, but also several top theologians. A large portion of the expenses of the Meeting were quietly underwritten by a large North American Mission Board.<sup>67</sup> The major documents of the Meeting were published by a Chilean Protestant publishing house (*Mundo Nuevo*); this was followed by a full documentation in *Cristianismo y Sociedad* prepared by ISAL's Department of Studies. This is why in addition to the hostility shown by some Latin American intelligence services (which "carefully listed the participants and controlled their departure from and return to their respective countries") and the criticism aired by Catholic organizations and periodicals, several "Protestant rightist movements denounced it in acid tones."<sup>68</sup>

### *The Charismatic Renewal Movement*

In addition to witnessing the emergence of the Theology of Liberation and the Christians for Socialism Movement, the 1969-74 period saw the rise of the Charismatic Renewal Movement. Though this movement has been associated with Pentecostal groups in existence since the early part of the 20th century, it must not be confused with them. For it differs in many ways from classical Pentecostalism, one of the most important of which is ecumenical range: the Movement has a broader ecumenical range than its classical counterpart. It has made an impact both in Catholic circles and also among all the varieties of Protestants.

To be sure, the roots of the Movement go back much further than 1969. In Brazil, it can be traced back to 1957, and in Argentina, to 1964. On the Catholic side, it has been largely influenced by the North American Catholic Charismatic Movement, which began to take shape in the mid 60's.<sup>69</sup>

Yet, it was not until 1969 that the Renewal Movement began to spread on a continental level. In that year, a leader of the Argentine

67. Cf. Míguez-Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. xxi.

68. *Ibid.*

69. Cf. Orlando E. Costas, "Dateline Buenos Aires," *World Vision Magazine* (May 1972), p. 22. See also, Paul Lewis, "Renewal in the Brazilian Church," (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Wheaton Graduate School of Theology, 1972); Guillermo Cook Bewick, *Análisis socio-teológico del movimiento de renovación carismática con referencia especial al caso costarricense* (San José: Publicaciones INDEF, 1973).

Protestant wing (Juan Carlos Ortíz) was invited to hold special meetings in Costa Rica under the auspices of several local institutions. His messages, which not only focused on spiritual renewal through the baptism of the Spirit but also on the total renewal of the church, especially its structures, created a small commotion among the Protestants of the country.<sup>70</sup> Several months later, the General Secretary of Evangelism in Depth, Rubén Lores, stirred the Latin American Congress on Evangelization with what Peter Wagner has described as "an epoch-making address."<sup>71</sup> Lores described the growth of the Charismatic Movement in non-Pentecostal churches, especially Mainline Protestant and Catholic. Linking this movement to the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, Lores referred to three types of Pentecostals: the classical groups, the Penteprotestants and the Pentecatholics. He then went on to state how Mainline Protestant churches in many countries of Latin America had been caught up in the Charismatic stream. The message, though controversial in the eyes of some, turned out to be prophetic.<sup>72</sup>

It is interesting to note that both Lores and Ortíz had been featured speakers several months before at the III CELA.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, the CLADE Executive Committee, under the strong influence of an Argentine contingent which was disturbed by the Renewal Charismatic Movement, refused to respond to numerous petitions from the participants during the Congress requesting that Ortíz be asked to speak. Thus, while by 1969 Mainline Protestants were already publically recognizing the importance of the Charismatic Renewal Movement, Evangelicals (dominated by a strong anti-Charismatic, theologically conservative contingent) were not prepared to do so. Not until the 1974 International Congress of World Evangelization would Evangelical Protestantism publically acknowledge (and then on European continental soil) the

70. Cook, *Caso costarricense*, pp. 56f.

71. Wagner, *The Pentecostals*, p. 149.

72. Ruben Lores, "Sobre toda carne," *Acción en Cristo*, pp. 11ff.

73. In fact, in his fourth message at the III CELA ("The Pentecostal Currents of the Day"), Lores gave a preview of his address at CLADE-69. Cf. C. Peter Wagner, "Confidential Report to Members of the Evangelical Committee on Latin America on the Third Latin American Protestant Congress (III CELA), Colegio Ward, Buenos Aires. July 13-19, 1969" (Photocopy), p. 5.

significance of this movement in Latin America, of which Ortíz is one of the most distinguished leaders.<sup>74</sup>

In 1971, a North American Catholic Charismatic priest came to Costa Rica for a three day visit at the invitation of one of the classical Pentecostal churches. His visit sparked a fire within Protestant and Catholic groups.<sup>75</sup> The same priest, who traveled with a North American Methodist Charismatic pastor, went to other countries sharing with Catholics and Protestants the experience of renewal that churches of all denominations were having in the USA.

In the same year, the pioneer account of the North American Catholic Charismatic Movement was translated into Spanish.<sup>76</sup> The book, which had already been introduced to Latin American Evangelicals by Lores at CLADE, was widely distributed among Protestants and Catholics. A year later (1972), a Latin American version of the North American Catholic Charismatic magazine, *New Covenant*<sup>77</sup> appeared.

The Movement continued to spread. When in 1971 UNELAM proposed to a group of Latin American leaders the possibility of a Pentecostal congress, Eneas Tognini (a Brazilian Baptist Charismatic), together with Ortíz and Jorge Imitian of the Argentine Renewal Movement, insisted on differentiating between "biblical Pentecostals and denominational Pentecostals," the former defined as those who have had a "Pentecostal experience."<sup>78</sup> According to Tognini, there were many congregations that had the Pentecostal experience without being part of a Pentecostal denomination. Mainline Charismatic churches, said Tognini, serve as intermediaries and connecting links between "the historic and the classical Pentecostal churches."<sup>79</sup> Accordingly, he insisted that the former be included in any future congress of the Latin American Protestant-Pentecostal

74. See, for example, Stanley Mooneyham, "Acts of the Holy Spirit '74," in *Let the Earth*, pp. 433ff., where he interviews Ortíz; and the latter's testimony, "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Evangelization, Individually and Through the Church," in *Ibid.*, p. 271f.

75. Cf. Cook, *Caso costarricense*, pp. 52ff.

76. Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan, *Pentecostales católicos* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1971).

77. *Alabaré* (Aguas Buenas, Puerto Rico).

78. Juan Carlos Ortiz, "Minutas de la reunión de preparación para el congreso pentecostal sugerido por UNELAM," Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1971, p. 1 (carbon copy).

family. Unfortunately, as of 1975 the proposed congress had not been realized although UNELAM was still trying to bring it about.

In 1972, however, 80 leaders from Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Ecuador, Colombia and Costa Rica met in Buenos Aires to share their insights and experiences in the Charismatic Renewal Movement. One of the salient features of this event was its ecumenical emphasis. Meeting at a Catholic retreat house belonging to and cared for by the Focolares Movement, the participants shared with one another information as to how their renewal experience had given them a new love for their Protestant and Catholic "separated brethren."<sup>80</sup>

By 1973, the Renewal Movement was having such an impact upon Protestant and Catholic churches throughout Latin America that it was commanding the attention of students of the contemporary church.<sup>81</sup> A year later, accounts were being given everywhere of numerous cases of charismatic experiences in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Mexico and Puerto Rico, where Protestant and Catholic Charismatics were actively engaged in renewal movements within local Catholic and Protestant parishes, groups and projects.<sup>82</sup> This is why early in 1975, Mortimer Arias could state:

Two kinds of ecumenism have emerged in Latin America: the charismatic movement and the liberation movement. Both cut across confessional barriers, creating a unity previously unknown and which has nothing to do with official or church ecumenism. Both are rooted in the Bible and in Christian experience. One is more private, individual and emotional, while the other is more social, activist and committed. They follow different roads.

But both are a gift from God in our present historical situation in Latin America. Will we be able to discover them, to recognize and accept them? Above all, can we be open to cross-fertilization, since both offer us the dialectical richness of the Christ who frees and unites?<sup>83</sup>

79. *Ibid.*

80. Costas, "Buenos Aires," p. 22.

81. Cf. the studies of Cook and Lewis (above). The former documents the Costa Rican case (but with many references to the Argentine model) and the latter, the Brazilian experience.

82. Based on the author's personal knowledge through his continental travels during 1974.

83. Mortimer Arias, "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites," in *One World*, No. 4 (March 1975), 17.



### *The Political Struggle for Religious Symbols*

The religious significance of our period of research is highlighted by a fourth fact. Beginning with the 1969 decree (869) of the Brazilian military Junta instituting the Moral and Civic Education program under the direction of a National Moral and Civic Commission, and including the confrontation between the Christians for Socialism Movement and the Catholic hierarchy/Christian Democratic Movement, the publication of the *Declaration of Principles of the Chilean Government* in March 1974, and its subsequent defense by a large sector of Chilean Protestantism,<sup>84</sup> the period in consideration was characterized by what could be rightly described as a political struggle for religious symbols. The root of this struggle lies, on the one hand, on the importance attached to religion in Iberian-American culture and, on the other, in the awareness of this fact by the political forces of the Continent. This accentuates the ideological function of religion in contemporary Latin American society.<sup>85</sup>

✓ The Conservative forces have emphasized the role of religion as a moral, stabilizing force, the guardian of traditional values and a means of preserving law and order. They have appealed to the popular sector's proneness "to 'sacramentalize' the *status quo*, or what's even worse, to interpret backward political changes as the 'will of God'."<sup>86</sup>

✓ The Revolutionaries, on the other hand, have sought to put religion at the service of the process of liberation. They have tried to remove the ideological roadblocks set up by conservatives, so as to help bring about the historical commitment of the church to the oppressed and exploited sectors of society.

The Reformists have tried to keep a creative tension between Conservatives and Revolutionaries by proposing a socialist model

84. For a discussion and references of the Brazilian Moral and Civic Education program and the *Declaration of Principles of the Chilean Government*, see chapter VI of this work.

85. For a penetrating analysis of the ideological function of religion in society, with specific reference to the Chilean situation of the Allende period, see Hugo Assmann's essay, "El cristianismo, su plusvalía ideológica y el costo social de la revolución socialista," in his *Teología desde la praxis de la liberación* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1973), pp. 171-202.

86. Segundo Galilea, "Pastoral popular, liberación y política," in *Pastoral popular*, IPLA No. 14, p. 29.

undergirded by "Christian" ethical principles. In the process, however, they have fallen prey to the forces of reaction and conservation.

The impact of this struggle upon Latin American Protestantism (noted already in a general way in the previous chapter) will be further observed in future chapters. For the moment, it suffices simply to point to it as a fundamental contributing factor to the conflictive reality of our chronological context.

### THE SPECIFIC RATIONALE FOR THE CHRONOLOGICAL BOUNDARIES

Meanwhile, let us consider, in conclusion, the specific rationale for our chronological boundaries.

Why the closing date? The reason is quite simple: It was the latest possible date for the selection of available material. It was also the year when I left Latin America for Europe to carry out an analysis of the research material. Even so, I managed to return for a short visit in January 1975, to hold important interviews with key leaders living in or traveling through Europe and to carry out intensive correspondence with others. This allowed me to collect additional data and to collate my own observations with those of other leaders. The year 1974 was, in short, the most reasonable closing date for a work written primarily in 1975.

As for the starting date, it has already been indicated that 1969 was a most important year for Latin American Protestants. In that year, two continental events took place which were of utmost missiological significance. In July, 1969, the III CELA was held in Buenos Aires. This was followed four months later by CLADE. These meetings constitute watersheds in the development of two of the three major varieties of Protestantism discussed in chapter II.

It is beyond the purpose of this study to deal with the Evangelical-Protestant type. We must leave, therefore, an analysis of CLADE for a future occasion. The III CELA, however, will occupy our attention in the next two chapters.

## **PART TWO**

### **A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS**

## CHAPTER IV

### THE THIRD LATIN AMERICAN PROTESTANT CONFERENCE (III CELA) AND THE NEW PROTESTANT CONSCIOUSNESS

On July 1969 Protestants from all over the Continent gathered at Ward College in Buenos Aires to celebrate the III CELA. Almost ten years had passed since the last continent-wide meeting.<sup>1</sup> Originally slated for 1966, it was not until 1967 that the actual planning for the III CELA got under way. It was then postponed twice and finally displaced from Río de Janeiro to Buenos Aires. In spite of the difficulties with its organization, the Conference turned out to be a landmark in the ecumenical history of Latin American Protestantism. For though it was not representative of all the churches and related agencies and groups, and though it did not constitute a legislative event similar to Medellín,<sup>2</sup> the III CELA provided an inventory of what was taking place within Protestant Christianity. In this respect, it revealed a new consciousness. What was the content of this new Protestant consciousness and how was it revealed at the III CELA?

1. There have been six such conferences. They are: (1) The Pan American Protestant Congress, Panama (1916); (2) the Congress of Christian Work, Montevideo (1925); (3) the Hispanic-American Protestant Congress, Havana (1929); (4) the I CELA, Buenos Aires (1949); (5) the II CELA, Lima (1961); and (6) the III CELA, Buenos Aires (1969). A IV CELA is being planned for 1976 in Guadalajara, Mexico.

2. Cf. Hector Borrat, "Towards a Latin American Protestantism," trans. by James and Margaret Goff from the Spanish original in *Cuadernos de Marcha*, No. 29 (September, 1969), p. 6 (mimeographed). Borrat rightly points out the "greater distance" that exists "between the III CELA pronouncements and the local congregations than between the documents of Medellín and the local parishes." This is not due so much to the existing divisions in Protestantism, as Borrat argues, as to the fact that the documents of all the CELAs are descriptive rather than prescriptive. It is true, however, that the diversity of Protestant churches and organizations do create difficulties in putting into practice at the level of the grass roots things agreed upon at "conciliar or conference" level. But this is a difficulty that not even the RCC, with a more unified line of authority, has been able to avoid. Cf., for instance, Ronaldo Muñoz, *Nueva conciencia*, p. 297:

## A NEW VISION

To begin with, the III CELA revealed a Protestantism with a new vision of social reality, of itself and of the Roman Catholic Church. This becomes evident the moment one places its documents alongside those of the II CELA and analyzes them in the light of the traditional Protestant mentality.<sup>3</sup> As Hector Borrat has noted: "It is precisely by means of confrontation with their context that the III CELA documents carry the transcendancy of something totally new."<sup>4</sup>

*The Social Reality*

To be sure, at the II CELA there was an effort to become more contextual and concrete in the analysis of the continental reality. There was a general awareness of the situation of underdevelopment and the need for structural changes in the face of oppression and a commitment to a stance on the side of freedom and justice.<sup>5</sup> But, as José Míguez-Bonino has observed, "The concrete perspective of these changes [were] . . . basically developmentalistic. . ."<sup>6</sup> He points as evidence to "the socio-economic models" that were underscored ("an increase in capital investment, conditions of production, better distribution of income, incorporation into the mainstream of society of the marginized sectors") and the "process of change" that were alluded to ("educational reforms, a widening of the democratic

"In Medellín the hierarchical church recognized its faults and committed itself to conversion. . . [but] Many bishops and priests, even though they were in agreement, showed themselves paralyzed in reference to action — they feared the risks and the experiences — and did not aim at putting themselves to work with constancy."

3. For a discussion on the traditional Protestant mentality, see — in addition to the articles of Rubem Alves, "Función ideológica," and Míguez-Bonino, "Cristianismo en América Latina" and "Visión del cambio social" referred to in previous chapters — Samuel Escobar, "Responsabilidad social de la iglesia," in *Acción en Cristo*, pp. 32-39; Charles F. Denton, "La mentalidad protestante: un enfoque sociológico," in Padilla, ed. *Latinoamérica hoy*, pp. 67-79; and my *El protestantismo*, pp. 41-57, 149-152.

4. Borrat, "Protestantism," p. 9.

5. Cf. *Cristo, la esperanza para América Latina: Ponencias, informes, comentarios de la II Conferencia Evangélica Latinoamericana* (Buenos Aires: Confederación Evangélica del Río de la Plata, 1962), 119-120, 148-156.

6. Míguez-Bonino, "Visión del cambio social," p. 185.

process, reconciliation of the social classes, reform of international commerce").<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, the III CELA – though by no means exempt from ambiguities, as it shall be noted in due course – had a more precise and engaging socio-analytical language. Indeed, the documents reveal a clearer focus and a deeper perception of the Latin American reality.

For example, whereas the II CELA expressed a fundamental commitment to the "democratic organization of Latin American society,"<sup>8</sup> the III CELA underscored the need for "more just and humane forms of social organization."<sup>9</sup> Of course, the "democratic ideal" was kept, but not without noting "the failures and . . . frustrations, the disillusionments and distrust [which] many regimes that call themselves 'democratic' have produced."<sup>10</sup>

The perspicacity with which the III CELA dealt with Latin American social reality is especially evident in many of the statements of the various commissions.<sup>11</sup> At the root of the existing situation of underdevelopment lies a "socio-economic disequilibrium of the social classes," says the report of Commission Three.<sup>12</sup> The church needs to pinpoint "the causes and those responsible" for the plight of the masses, adds Commission Two.<sup>13</sup> More than this, the church needs to promote the "dynamic and decisive participation of the faithful, even of pastors, in the processes of transformation of [the prevailing] political systems, . . ."<sup>14</sup> The church should, therefore, work for the replacement of "structures of oppression" with structures of "humanization."<sup>15</sup>

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Cristo, la esperanza*, p. 120.

9. *Deudores*, p. 50.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

11. There were six study commissions appointed, each covering the following topics: (1) "Our Debt and Specific Responsibility as a Latin American Protestant Church"; (2) "Our Protestant Debt in the Social, Economic and Political Transformations of Latin America"; (3) "Our Protestant Debt in the Transition of a Rural to an Urban Society"; (4) "Our Protestant Debt toward the Latin American Woman"; (5) "Our Debt Towards the Latin American Youth"; (6) "Our Protestant Debt Toward the Roman Catholic Community."

12. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*

Commission Five uses even stronger language. According to one of its two reports, the youth of the Continent "have inherited unjust situations and inhuman systems." This has led the more conscientized ones to take "a revolutionary attitude" and commit themselves to the "process . . . of liberation" which is under way in Latin America. This conscious and revolutionary sector is present in the church, adds the report, and expects the church "to commit itself" to the continental process of liberation, taking thereby "the gospel to its ultimate consequences."<sup>16</sup>

This is, of course, the language of the most radical of all the groups present at the III CELA. But even the most reactionary — the other faction of the same commission — reinforced the socio-critical mood when it stated in its minority report: "We are against the . . . economic measures of the USA and some European countries, who purchase our raw materials at despicable prices and sell us their manufactured products at exorbitant prices."<sup>17</sup>

### *The Protestant Community*

This qualitatively different social consciousness was complemented by the way the III CELA saw itself as a representative

16. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 44. This socio-critical mood illustrates the extent to which the "dependence theory" of such social scientist as Furtado, Cardoso, Martins, Frank, Ribeiro and others had penetrated into Latin American Society by the end of the 60's. Basically this theory holds that the present situation of backwardness and underdevelopment is the result of the structural dependence into which the Latin American countries were molded through the European conquest and colonialization and the subsequent process of North American imperialism and neo-colonialism. A metropolis-satellite relationship was thus established with an emphasis upon internal relationships which promote and maintain dependence (internal colonialism). Cf., among others, Celso Furtado, *Formação econômica da América Latina* (Rio de Janeiro, 1968); Fernando Henrique Cardoso y Enzo Faletto, *Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina* (México: Siglo XXI, 1969), Luciano Martins, *Industrialização, burguesia nacional e desenvolvimento: introdução à crise brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro, 1968), André Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (London: Pelican Books, 1969); Darcy Ribeiro, *The Americas and Civilization*, trans. from the Portuguese by Linton Lomas Barrett and Marie McDavid Barrett (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972); *Idem*, *El dilema de América Latina: estructuras del poder y fuerzas insurgentes* (México: Siglo XXI, 1971). For a historical approach to the matter of dependence, see Ger van Roon, *Europa en de derde wereld, een historische benadering* (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1975).

Protestant gathering. Indeed, its theme ("Debtors to the World") marked a new mode of thought in the history of the continental Protestant conferences. As Míguez-Bonino has said: "the Conference was shot through with a feeling of self-criticism: it was fully aware of the divisiveness and the excessive polemic zeal that characterized the church. . ."<sup>18</sup> This led Commission One to acknowledge the church's foreignness. While expressing profound gratitude for the missionaries that brought the gospel to Latin America, the Commission considered it imperative that the church

get rid of those garments that do not permit it to express itself in the form and thought born out of the Latin American experience. . . A Church fastened to foreign garments does not share the life and attitude. . . of Latin America; rather it isolates itself and lives with its back turned to the changes, anguishes and destiny of Latin American man.<sup>19</sup>

Not only did the III CELA sense the cultural alienation of Latin American Protestantism. It also lamented the state of non-communication that had characterized the churches' relations with one another and had kept them from adequately expressing their unity in Christ.<sup>20</sup> Beyond that, the Conference assessed Protestantism to be missiologically lethargic, in spite of its continuous numerical increase.<sup>21</sup> The historical moment in which the Continent found itself was confronting the church with a new challenge for which it was unprepared. Its "structures" were rigid and archaic; its "forms of worship" were bound to an "inherited past" which did not correspond with the idiosyncracies of the various socio-cultural units that comprise the continental mosaic; in short, its missionary performance revealed a missiology bound to "concepts and modalities of the past." The III CELA thus envisioned a Protestantism in need of a missiological awakening which would lead to "new frontiers of witness and obedience."<sup>22</sup>

This self-critical attitude was the more remarkable given the wide range of churches and organizations represented. There was a serious effort to involve as many types of Protestants as possible.<sup>23</sup>

18. Míguez-Bonino, "Visión del cambio social," pp. 185, 186.

19. *Deudores*, p. 18.

20. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

21. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 50.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

23. Cf. Emilio Castro, Personal letter, February 2, 1975; C. Peter Wagner,



There were 43 churches, ecclesiastical bodies and para-church organizations represented, covering a wide variety of theological positions and types of organizational structures. Especially significant were the presence of Evangelicals and Pentecostals. Several of their leaders were given important parts in the program, among them, Enrique Chavez, a Chilean Pentecostal, Juan Carlos Ortíz, José Ferreira, of the Evangelical Church of Perú, and Ruben Lores, General Secretary of the Evangelism in Depth Movement. Enrique Mercado, of the Puerto Rican Pentecostal Church of God, was elected as one of the Conference's three vice-presidents. In an evening panel, chaired by another Pentecostal, Francisco Anabalón, there was time allotted to representatives from Evangelism in Depth and World Vision, two Evangelical enterprises, to present their work and answer questions from the floor, along with representatives from UNELAM, ISAL, MEC and the WCC.

In other words, the organizers of the Conference went out of their way to make sure that there was "an open ecumenism."<sup>24</sup> This, too, is why there was an extraordinary effort made to balance the participation of para-church leaders and ecclesiastical authorities and of outside "Ecumenicals" and Evangelicals.<sup>25</sup> Whether the III CELA turned out to be as open as the organizing committee wanted it to be is, according to some, a debatable issue.<sup>26</sup> Be that as it may, the Committee was successful in its attempt to engage the participation of a wide representation of all types of Protestants, something which the previous conferences had not been able to achieve.

"Confidential Report"; *Idem.*, "Argentina Argumentum," *Christianity Today* (August, 1969).

24. Castro, Letter.

25. For example, not only was the World Council of Churches invited to send a representative (Victor Hayward), well known figures of the Evangelical world (Clyde Taylor, Paul Rees and Peter Wagner) were also extended invitations. While Taylor was not able to accept the invitation on account of a conflict of dates, Rees and Wagner came, the former representing *World Vision* and the latter as the official representative of *Christianity Today*.

26. For example; in his "Argentina Argumentum" article, C. Peter Wagner reported

"The numerical advantage of the conservative evangelicals, while perhaps not reflecting fully their preponderance on a continental scale, became evident as the meetings progressed. But their lack of orientation and organization was equally evident - especially in light of the smooth-running machine the ecumenical leaders had assembled, Radical theologians were spaced throughout the six working committees and were voted into key spots as recording secretaries.

### *The Roman Catholic Church*

The III CELA also viewed the Roman Catholic Church in a new way. It acknowledged not only the winds of renewal and change within the Catholic Church but, even more significantly, that Protestants had not always acted with a spirit of love toward Catholics. This latter reflected an entirely new attitude toward an old foe.

That a change was taking place in the traditional Protestant outlook with regard to the Roman Catholic Church was clearly evident in the course of the 60's. The local or national chapters of MEC, ULAJE and ISAL had broken the Protestant confessional boundaries by incorporating into its membership both Catholics and Protestants concerned with the social situation of Latin America and the Christian's responsibility respecting it. José Míguez-Bonino, who could rightly be considered the "dean" of Latin American Protestant theologians, had been an official observer at Vatican II. In 1967, he was invited to share his experience, analysis and interpretation of the Catholic "*aggiornamento*" in the Strachan Lectureship Series of the Latin American Biblical Seminary,<sup>27</sup> which at that time represented the strongest outpost of Latin American Conservative Protestantism. And, as was noted in chapter III, in 1968 the Catholic hierarchy extended an official invitation to two Protestants to attend the Medellín Conference as observers, thus officially recognizing the existence of Latin American Protestant Christianity.

At the III CELA Protestants reciprocated: for the first time in its history the Latin American Protestant movement invited (two) official Roman Catholic observers to participate in a major conference. And as has been noted, there was a full commission dedicated to the study of the Protestant debt toward the Roman Catholic community.

In its report, this commission took note of the changes that have taken place in the Catholic Church as a result of Vatican II: a new attitude toward other Christian and non-Christian "communities and ideologies," the growing interest in the reading and diffusion of the Scriptures and the courageous commitment toward the solution of social evils that was being witnessed in several sectors of the Church.<sup>28</sup>

27. Cf. José Míguez-Bonino, *Concilio abierto* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1967).

28. *Deudores*, p. 46.

The report also pointed out, however, that Protestants themselves had not always received a fraternal treatment from the Catholic Church. It lamented the fact that there were still many sectors of that communion that had yet to give evidence of the "influence of the times."<sup>29</sup> It acknowledged, moreover, that there were "still many doctrinal differences" that separated the two communities and that in many instances both parties were still prisoners of "the ignorance and prejudice" of the past.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, the Report expressed the hope that a growing mutual understanding of each other through Bible study, prayer and service would draw the two communities to Jesus Christ and that he would use both in "the extension of his kingdom" and would give to both a "better understanding of his will" for "this critical hour" of Latin America.<sup>31</sup> It was further hoped that such an attitude would be interpreted as a response to the call of the gospel and not as "a giving-in to" or 'rejection' of our Protestant tradition. . ."<sup>32</sup>

While this was a cautious report, it was also undeniably positive and open. It reflected a new ecumenical awareness on the part of Protestant Christians, and thereby a totally new consciousness of the ecclesiastical realities of Latin America.

### A NEW THEOLOGY

A second dimension of this new consciousness is represented by the theological discourse that took place at the III CELA. Indeed, the documents reveal a line of thought not detectable in previous gatherings.

#### *An Incarnational Missiology*

An important aspect of this thought is the notion of the Incarnation as a missiological model. This theme was, of course, briefly alluded to in Lima.<sup>33</sup> At the III CELA, however, it constituted a

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*

33. The roots of the Incarnation as a theological category in Latin America are hard to trace. Julio De Santa Ana traces it back to the 50's and links it with the influence of Barth, Brunner, Tillich, Niebuhr and Aulen (*Protestantismo*, pp. 114f.), while Emilio Castro relates it, especially, to the impact of Barth and later Bonhoeffer (cf. "La creciente presencia de criterios de interpretación

fundamental point of reference. This is made particularly clear in the report of Commission Two.

The report starts with a Christological affirmation: "The faith of Christians is born from the goodwill of God" who "reveals himself."<sup>34</sup> It is a faith grounded in the life and ministry of Christ, "who in the Incarnation identifies with humanity in its misery in order to reconcile all with God through his sacrifice on the Cross and to give them, by virtue of the Resurrection and the gift of the Spirit, the power and the hope of a new life."<sup>35</sup>

"The incarnated God in Christ is love," his crucifixion is love's greatest expression, and his resurrection constitutes the announcement of the possibility of one's becoming "a new person who goes on to share in Christ the fundamental vocation of an integral service to the neighbor."<sup>36</sup> This is "a sign of the new creation and the Christian hope."<sup>37</sup> To be in Christ is thus to be committed to a life of service to others.

In the context of Latin America, added the Report, "to obey the call of Christ is to enter into a life of commitment" to a life-style patterned after his incarnation. This means, on the one hand, participation in the human aspirations for a more just society,

histórica en la evaluación de la hermenéutica bíblica," *Pueblo oprimido, Señor de la historia*, Hugo Assmann, ed. (Montevideo: Tierra Nueva, 1972), pp. 213ff.). Be that as it may, toward the beginning of the 60's one could observe the following general lines: (1) the influence of the most recent theological developments in Europe and North America, particularly in its Barthian variant. The Neo-orthodox Christological lines penetrated also through the writings of Emil Brunner (*Nuestra fe* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora 1959)) and Donald Bailli (*Dios estaba en Cristo* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1960)). (2) Then came the First Consultation on Church and Society in 1961, which was the result of several studies conducted toward the end of the 50's in Brazil and the River Plate area, and the II CELA. (3) This was followed by a growing theological consciousness that can be illustrated by the journal, *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, and the publication (under the sponsorship of Union Seminary of Puerto Rico – which at that time was one of the most active theological centers in the hemisphere) of Justo L. González's *Revolución y encarnación* (Rio Piedras: Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico, 1965). It was not, however, until the III CELA that the concept of the Incarnation penetrated the thought-structure of an official interdenominational and continental ecclesiastical gathering of Protestants.

34. *Deudores*, p. 22.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*,

"whose structures will no longer disfigure humanity and impede it from living fully in accordance with the purposes of God."<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, it means active intervention in the life of the peoples of Latin America, participation "in the process of change and urgent transformations, bringing to it a Christian presence, pointing out, in the midst of conflict, the goal of reconciliation in justice and forgiveness."<sup>39</sup>

Active participation in this mission, patterned after the incarnate Christ in his life and ministry, was the outstanding debt that Protestants owed to Latin America. Thus, the Message of the Conference stated that

We owe to Latin America an integral ministry; an evangelistic task that invites humanity to become a disciple of Jesus Christ; an identification with the pains and hopes of Latin American men and women [patterned after] the identification of Jesus Christ with his people in his pilgrimage to the Cross; an intelligent and efficacious service in the search for more just and humane forms of social service. All of this is to be expressed in the life of a community liberated from all slavery by the resurrection of Jesus Christ and called [to show forth] that liberty in the joyous search of God's tomorrow for our continent.<sup>40</sup>

Evangelization, identification, committed efficacious service and a paradigmatic witness — this is the mission which, modeled on the life and work of Christ, Protestants owe to the Continent.

### *A Service-Oriented Ecclesiology*

Such a missiological perspective could not leave the identity of the church unaffected. If the church exists for mission, if this mission is to be patterned after the mission of Christ, then the church's identity cannot be found in itself, but only in its service to Jesus Christ in the world. This was the direction to which the report of Commission Two pointed when it sought to answer the question, what is the meaning of the church in Latin America? "To be the church in Latin America," asserted the Commission, "is to participate in the Incarnation of the Lord in a multiformal and problematic situation."<sup>41</sup> The church reveals itself as a "called-out"

38. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

community in the measure in which it makes Christ present in society; it makes Christ real in the measure that it participates in the problems of society.

This concept of the church as a servant-community coincided with the majority report of Commission Five. For them, the church was a community in the diaspora, a people en route "that [traveled] through the world, ages, generations" and shared the world's struggles and anguishes.<sup>42</sup>

The notion of a mission-oriented church, which had been clearly enunciated in Lima, was thus carried a step further at the III CELA. The church not only exists for<sup>43</sup> but is itself identified by its mission in the world, a mission which is not limited to proclaiming "the message of Christ" and bearing witness "to him,"<sup>44</sup> but demands the church's incarnation in the life and conflicts of society.

### *A Latin American Christology*

At the bottom of this relatively new missiological and ecclesiological reflection lay the search for an indigenous Christology. Already in 1968 UNELAM, which coordinated the work of the III CELA, had addressed itself to the need for a Latin American Christology in a letter sent to all the federations and councils of churches throughout the Continent.<sup>45</sup> Many years before, John

42. *Ibid.*, p. 42. For Commission Two, however, the church in the diaspora was limited to the action of individual Christians in the world. Richard Shaull traces the roots of this notion, in the Latin American context, to Hans-Ruedi Weber, "The Marks of an Evangelizing Church," in *The Missionary Church in East and West*, pp. 109-110. Shaull questions the idea not so much for what it says as for what it leaves out. He states:

"The concept is useful in all of its scope. However, it does not attack the affirmation that the gathering of the people of God today ought to take the form of a community identified with Western Christendom. Moreover, it does not contemplate the possibility that in the present situation the church finds itself in the Diaspora, and not just the individual Christian in his or her everyday life."

(Richard Shaull, "La forma de la iglesia en la nueva diáspora," in *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, II:6 (1964), p. 6.) Shaull thus proposes a different understanding of the church in the diaspora, a definition that is employed in the report of the majority of the Commission on Youth.

43. Cf. *Cristo, la esperanza*, p. 125.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Karl Ernst Neisel [former Associate General Secretary of UNELAM], Personal interview, Frankfurt, Federal Republic of Germany, December 29-30, 1974.

Mackay had explored the problem in his classic study of Spanish spirituality in Latin America, *The Other Spanish Christ*.<sup>46</sup>

The issue was raised at the III CELA by commissions Two and Five. Commission Two stated: "We are concerned about the [kind of] image that we are willing to give [*i.e.* project] as witnesses of his salvation. . ."<sup>47</sup> Commission Five asked, in the majority report, "Who is Christ for the new generation?"<sup>48</sup> The two commissions followed up the issue with two separate statements.

Commission Two stated that the church in Latin America has not projected the image of the incarnate Christ who came to redeem "humanity in all of its dimensions."<sup>49</sup> It has turned its back on this Christ and has tolerated the systematic disfiguration of the image of God in Latin American men and women.<sup>50</sup> This has had a double evangelistic consequence. First, it has produced alienated Christian men and women rather than persons with "a full and real participation in the social, political and economic concerns" that express "their human maturity according to the measure of the fullness of Christ."<sup>51</sup> Secondly, it has caused many "to lose their faith" or has "hampered their full access to it."<sup>52</sup>

The majority report of Commission Five produced a similar statement. The churches "have confused the love of Christ with tolerance in the face of evil, the cross of Christ with passiveness, reconciliation with the covering over of tensions and conflicts."<sup>53</sup> Such an image, it added, is in direct opposition to the biblical witness to a Christ who in granting forgiveness "calls us to serve our brethren in their concrete reality," who in his death denounced "the structures of injustice and oppression" and who in the reconciliation of all things requires us to refrain from "conforming ourselves with any situation of non-resolved conflict or apparent peace," requiring us always to seek "the signs of that true peace that is founded upon justice and is perfected in love."<sup>54</sup>

46. John Mackay, *The Other Spanish Christ*. (London: SCM, 1932).

47., *Deudores*, p. 24.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

50. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 23, 24.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

54. *Ibid.*

Both reports denounced Latin American Protestants not only for falling into functional Christological heresy but also for distorting the church's evangelistic mission. They thus bring to light an interesting theological insight: A distorted mission may be, and indeed often is, undergirded by a distorted theology.

More important still is the fact that both reports detect a contradiction between the Christ that Protestants have preached and the Christ of the Bible whom they confess. This has produced another contradiction: instead of transforming Latin American Protestants into committed agents of change, Protestant preaching has alienated them from their society and further disfigured the already blurred image of God present in every human being. An implicit call, therefore, seems to be coming via these documents for the development of a more biblical, indigenous and engaged Christology.

### *A Liberating Anthropology*

The III CELA also evidenced an anthropological concern. Here again one finds throughout the documents a new line of thought.

One of the most striking notes was the special attention given to the Latin American woman. Two years before, UNELAM had held a consultation centering on the theme "The Role of the Woman in the Church and in Society."<sup>55</sup> It was the first event of its kind and thus paved the way for what is now a growing movement in Latin America. It also made inevitable the inclusion of the specific problem of the rights of women in the agenda of the III CELA.<sup>56</sup>

Commission Four underscored the situation of marginalization of Latin American women. In rural areas, many women are subjugated

55. Cf. Emilio Castro, ed., *El rol de la mujer en la iglesia y en la sociedad* (Montevideo: UNELAM, 1968). Especially significant is the paper of Beatriz Melano Couch, "El hombre y la mujer en la misión de Dios," pp. 75-91. Several years later she followed up this same theme with the publication of *La mujer y la iglesia* (Buenos Aires: Publicaciones El Escudo, 1973). So far as I know this is the first attempt to develop a Latin American theology of the woman (certainly it is within the Protestant world).

56. In this respect, the III CELA displayed a more advanced stance than Medellín. In the latter there was no treatment of women as such. The theme was only discussed in the context of the family. The most direct and incisive statement on the situation of marginalization of women was in reference to the "sexual disorders" in the family "born of a false concept of masculinity." Cf. CELAM, *Medellín II*, p. 86.



to sub-human patterns of conduct. In the process of internal migration, women are subject to the greatest hardship because they are ill prepared for such a venture and do not have the same opportunities as men to get rid of their tensions. They are thus beset by the anguish of promiscuity and the burden of children. Even in situations of upward mobility, women experience the effect of their inferior roles. Their incorporation into the working force of urban areas confronts them with ethical decisions for which they have not been adequately prepared. The painful realization that they get less for doing the same type of work as their male counterparts has pushed them into a social struggle for which they are not prepared. All of this is slowly forcing a redefinition of the life-style of many couples with concomitant effects for their entire families.

This situation of "marginalization and dependence," added the Commission, has been reinforced by the traditional religious environment.<sup>57</sup> It is clear from the witness of the Bible, however, that such treatment stands directly against God's purpose in creation and redemption. A "state of social unity and reciprocal cooperation" has been given to the human race in creation.<sup>58</sup> An even greater possibility has been made available in redemption: "In Christ there is neither male or female. They have both been redeemed to cooperate with God in the proclamation of the gospel and the manifestation of his love to the world."<sup>59</sup>

The church is compelled, therefore, actively to promote the liberation of Latin American women from their state of oppression. To help the Protestant churches of the Continent to make their contribution to this process, the Commission made several concrete recommendations.

Churches should "fortify their program among women" so as to be able better to minister to their respective life-situations.<sup>60</sup> They should explore the possibilities of organizing service and study groups that would help train men and women for "mutual cooperation in all the orders of life."<sup>61</sup> Churches should further "organize and stimulate studies on the problem of the woman and the family,"

57. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

61. *Ibid.*

especially in the larger cities, so as to discover the areas of greatest need and then channelize accordingly their diaconal ministries.<sup>62</sup> In addition, they should strengthen female education "in the light of Scripture" so that women will become conscious of their witnessing responsibility in their respective communities.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, churches should integrate women into the total ministry. That is, they should open the doors for women "to the fullest possibilities of work and leadership." Not the least of these possibilities are the "pastoral, evangelistic and social service ministries." To this end, the Commission recommended the promotion "of regional studies and consultations and the stimulation of publications... that will transmit this vision of one common vocation in Christ for men and women in all of the levels of the life of the Church and of Society."<sup>64</sup>

In critically reflecting upon the church's debt to the Latin American woman, the III CELA thus raised a fundamental anthropological issue in a male-dominated continent. Mankind is not made of a stronger and a weaker part; man is a unitary whole. As Beatriz Melano Couch has said: God created

one sole humanity; not two, nor three, nor a hundred; that of male and that of female; a black, a white and a yellow; that of the mighty and that of the oppressed; that of the free and that of the slave. In this being is involved the what-to-do, which is at once united and unitary. There is a divided and a unitary element in the human being, namely, that of having been created male and female; yet, both in one (Gen. 2:23), the one of the other and for the other. This . . . is more than a mere complement; it is the *raison d'être* of the human being. To discover the most profound meaning of this relation is to discover further the meaning of 'being human.'<sup>65</sup>

Contrary to C. Peter Wagner's assessment that "Except for friendly arguments between men and women the topic was generally unimpressive,"<sup>66</sup> the III CELA's report on women should be seen as an important contribution to the Conference's anthropological reflection. For it provides a fundamental clue to the meaning of the new man, which, in the opinion of Commission One, was beginning

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*

65. Melano-Couch, *La mujer*, p. 20. Also in Castro, ed. *El rol*, p. 75.

66. Wagner, "Confidential Report," p. 4.

to emerge in Latin America.<sup>67</sup> Whatever else can be said about this new Latin American, one thing stands out: "a new sense of human solidarity."<sup>68</sup> This sense of the collective implies the awareness of the need to overcome the alienation of man from neighbor, which "applies initially to the woman" as the first outcast of society.<sup>69</sup> The discovery of the other, of a larger reality than oneself, demands an awareness of one's human partner. In repudiating an oppressive past and searching for a "new day," Latin American society must also break with the individualism that has characterized it and the "male chauvenism" that has undergirded it. The breaking down of these "obstructive prejudices"<sup>70</sup> is a pre-condition for the new society. In short, there cannot be a new Latin American man which is not male *and* female.

This is why it is necessary and relevant to correlate "the Christian message with the search . . . of Latin America for a more just . . . and [human] . . . society."<sup>71</sup> For the gospel produces "a new man and the fermenting beginnings of a new society. . ." How does it do this? Through Christ "the authentic Messiah," whom it announces.<sup>72</sup> He is the new man of whom the church is, or ought to be, a sign. In its new life, in its commitment to the world, the church demonstrates what the new humanity is all about. The church is the one concrete point where glimpses of the totally new may be observed.

This is what Commission One meant by the seemingly awkward affirmation: "This new man is for the Church as well as for society."<sup>73</sup> That is, the new man, that totally new humanity which Christ represents, finds its prototype in the church; this new humanity is also the most profound and far-reaching answer to the Latin American quest for a new society. It is, therefore, imperative, according to the Report of this commission, that the church express visibly and concretely "the new lifestyle that springs from grace and not the law. . . , that . . . [implies] liberation from all legalism and

67. Cf. *Deudores*, pp. 18-19.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

69. Melano-Couch, "El hombre y la mujer," in Castro, ed. *El rol*, pp. 77, 78. She adds: "It is interesting that the Marxists were the first to recognize this fact: the first slave the woman, the first worker, the first proletariat."

70. *Deudores*, p. 19.

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*

73. *Ibid.*

moralism, as well as all immoralism, that gives a new conscience and greater sensitivity to the suffering neighbor. . .”<sup>74</sup>

But how can the church be a sign of this new humanity when in fact even its own members do not enjoy equality among themselves? This is another way of saying that there is a gap between what the church should be and what it is. The question then is, how can this gap be closed?

### *A Concern for the Spirit*

For an answer to this question the III CELA pointed to the Holy Spirit. Already in the Conference’s first position paper, Daily Rosende França<sup>75</sup> of Brazil, had stressed the role of the Holy Spirit in the creation of the new man.<sup>76</sup> In his fourth message, Lores pointed out that the Holy Spirit was renewing the church and urged that this “be received with gratitude and freedom. . .”<sup>77</sup> This recommendation was taken up in the Conference’s message to the churches. The latter acknowledged that “The Protestant church” throughout the Continent was experiencing “the manifestation of new gifts of the Holy Spirit. . . [equipping] it for the witness and service which Latin America demands. . .”<sup>78</sup>

The notion of the Holy Spirit as the dynamic, creative power in the fashioning of a new humanity and in the renewal and enablement

74. *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 20.

75. There were a total of six position papers delivered, each corresponding to the topic of each of the six study commissions. In addition to França, José Ferreira García of Perú read the second paper, Enrique Chavez of Chile, the third, Olga Ramírez of Guatemala, the fourth, Ruben P. Rivera of México, the fifth, and José Míguez-Bonino, the sixth. Unfortunately, these papers, except Míguez’s, were not published. The Conference’s official publication included only the reports of the working commissions, the message to the churches, the resolution of the assembly and the outline of Ruben Lores’ last sermon. The only written information that has been available to me on the *non-published documents* is the extensive and detailed summary of each position paper and of Lores’ six sermons in C. Peter Wagner’s “Confidential Report.” I have tried to collate Wagner’s view, however, with that of Emilio Castro, through interviews and correspondence; and Luis Buscafusco’s “personal impressions” and Adam Sosa’s historical account of the III CELA, both of which are included in the Conference’s official publication, *Deudores*.

76. Cf. Wagner, “Confidential Report,” p. 3.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

78. *Deudores*, p. 49.

of the church was also taken up by Commission One. In its report, the Commission referred to the Spirit as the fundamental resource for the renewal of "ecclesiastical institutions," traditional patterns of ministry and the communication of the faith. An openness to the Holy Spirit, it added, would enable the church to break with the "obstructing prejudices" that have kept it from living up to its high calling. Indeed, it would make possible the full participation of all of its members in its ongoing-life-in-mission.<sup>79</sup>

To the question, how can the gap be closed between what the church should be and what it is, the III CELA answered as follows: through the dynamic action of the Holy Spirit. In so doing, the Conference brought into the limelight an often forgotten but indispensable dimension of the Christian faith. Even more, it incorporated the fundamental theological insight of Protestant Pentecostalism. The III CELA thus became the first continental-wide Protestant gathering to give outward evidence of taking seriously the theological contribution of that sector which, despite its being the largest and most representative group of Latin American indigenous Protestantism, has often been treated as an outcast.

### A NEW CONTROVERSY

But if it is true that the III CELA revealed a Protestantism with a new vision and a new theological line of thinking, it is also quite evident that it brought out into the open a new type of controversy. At the II CELA Protestants were faced with a fundamentalist-modernist theological controversy.<sup>80</sup> By the time of the III CELA, however, a new, non-theological controversy had entered upon the scene, namely, that of political-ideological disagreement.

#### *The Planning Stage*

Signs of the conflict appeared early in the planning stage. At the Lima conference, the Brazilian delegation had offered to host the III CELA. In the meantime, however, UNELAM was formed and, among other things, was given the mandate to help promote the

79. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

80. See for example, the "Declaration of Principles" that was drawn up at the request of "some lay persons present" at the Conference. Cf. *Cristo, la esperanza*, pp. 119, 120. See also Míguez-Bonino, "Visión del cambio social," p. 184.

forthcoming conference. Evangelicals, under the leadership of Herbert Money — a missionary from New Zealand seconded to the Protestant Council of Peru — and others, were planning a “massive . . . takeover”<sup>81</sup> of the Conference in alliance with Pentecostals. They sought, therefore, to delay the process for at least one month in order to mobilize their forces more effectively.<sup>82</sup> At their request, the planning committee — organized in March, 1967 under the leadership of the Brazilian Confederation of Churches — postponed the Conference from December, 1967 to January, 1968. The Protestant Councils of Uruguay and Argentina “registered ‘vehement complaints’ with UNELAM,” according to C. Peter Wagner.<sup>83</sup> UNELAM, however, claimed not to have any prior knowledge of the change. In September, 1967 the Brazilian Confederation postponed the Conference indefinitely. A second date was set shortly thereafter for February, 1969, only to be cancelled altogether in December, 1968.

Why did the Brazilian Protestant Confederation of Churches decide first to postpone indefinitely and then to cancel the III CELA? Wagner has suggested that it was “due to difficulties which the Brazilian organizers had in working with UNELAM. . .”<sup>84</sup> In his view, the problem of control was at stake. Was the Conference going to be run by UNELAM and thus be used as a launching pad for a continental ecumenical offensive or was it going to be run by the local hosts and the organizing committee, which was heavily influenced by a strong Evangelical-Pentecostal coalition? The decision by the Confederation to cancel the Conference altogether meant then, according to Wagner, that the Brazilians were not willing to be a mere instrument in the hands of UNELAM.

81. Wagner, “Confidential Report,” p. 1.

82. The specific request came from the Chilean Council of Churches in July, 1967, with the backing of the Peruvian and Ecuadorian councils. In June the President of the Bolivian Protestant Association met with the Peruvian Council — of which Money was the Executive Secretary — to discuss the situation. On October 25, a group of Evangelical and Pentecostal leaders from Chile, Brazil and Perú met in Santiago, Chile “to study the possibility of setting up a South American Evangelical Fellowship which would fill the needs for coordination of conservative evangelical efforts to promote fellowship and evangelism better than UNELAM.” C. Peter Wagner, “Who Killed the Congress?” *World Vision Magazine* (January, 1968).

83. *Ibid.*

84. Wagner, “Confidential Report,” p. 1.

Emilio Castro, who at that time was UNELAM's coordinator, has advanced another opinion. The issue, according to him, was neither ecumenical nor theological, but ideological. The Brazilian Confederation was simply afraid of possible political consequences. It was "not sure that the III CELA would not be an occasion for subversive infiltrations."<sup>85</sup>

Though this latter possibility was denied by the president of the Brazilian Confederation in Buenos Aires at the III CELA,<sup>86</sup> there is enough evidence to substantiate it.<sup>87</sup> For one thing, Brazil was undergoing a most serious political upheaval. Any sign of an anti-government stance could be used to unleash repressive actions against the churches and their leaders.<sup>88</sup> For another thing, several denominations, notably the Presbyterians and Methodists, had been afflicted by internal ideological conflicts. This was further aggravated by the fact that the Confederation had just gone through a similar ideological conflict with its Department of Church and Society (the national chapter of ISAL). In consequence, the Confederation seems to have been left with a very low level of tolerance (to say the least) in reference to those who were critical of the Brazilian *status quo*. The fact that the Confederation decided to withdraw its initial offer to host the Conference is, therefore, explicable on ideological grounds (alone).

85. Castro, Personal letter, February 2, 1975.

86. Wagner, "Confidential Report," p. 1.

87. This does not mean that Wagner was totally wrong in his judgment. Indeed, there were some who refused to participate on account of the ecumenical-theological issue (the suspicion that UNELAM really represented a front cover for the WCC and that the Conference would be totally run by non-Evangelicals and non-Pentecostals). This was the case with the Protestant Association of Bolivia and the Protestant Council of Perú "who took definite decisions in official council sessions not to send delegates to Buenos Aires." (Wagner, "Confidential Report," p. 1.) The Assemblies of God instructed its member churches in Buenos Aires not to participate in the opening session. (Castro, Letter). This was verified by Juan Carlos Ortiz who told me in a personal conversation that the denominational authorities had prohibited him from speaking at the III CELA; he did anyway, but against their will.

88. It is interesting to note, for example, how when a complaint was aired at the III CELA that the President of ULAJE had not been permitted to leave Brazil, a leading member of the Brazilian delegation stood up and said that the reason why he had not been permitted to leave the country was on account of "his previous subversive actions against the Brazilian government." (Wagner, "Confidential Report," p. 9.)

### *The Conference Itself*

The fact that the Argentinian Confederation of Protestant Churches moved quickly, at the request of UNELAM, to take over the organization of the Conference did not mean that the III CELA had been set free from ideological controversies. Indeed, as it has been noted already, the problem was brought right onto the floor of the Assembly and especially into the work of the commissions.

For example, in his paper, José Ferreira came out in favor of a developmentalistic-democratic economic model. In his view this was a much more viable alternative than that of revolutionary-socialism. The paper precipitated a lively discussion "in which the delegates polarized into two camps: that of development and that of revolution."<sup>89</sup>

But where the ideological conflict really came to a head was in the Commission on Youth. It has been said that this commission was so divided that it came before the Assembly with both a majority and a minority report. The former reflected a clear revolutionary line; the other a conservative stance. The way these two groups debated with each other has been vividly described by Wagner:

By all counts the youth topic provoked the greatest amount of interest and debate. The position paper was presented by Rubén Pedro Rivera of México. Apparently the young radicals were expecting that the rebellious voice of youth would carry a label of radical and revolutionary theology suggesting a deeper commitment on the part of youth to the revolution outside of the church. Instead of suggesting that youth tear down existing structures and erect new ones the paper challenged adults and the church to meet the needs of their youth, and to use the resources of Christ to discover the solution to the problem. Shouts of 'paternalism', 'ecclesiasticism' and 'ambivalence' were raised. The thoughts presented in the paper that 'Christ is the answer' was publicly ridiculed by some of the radicals. The discussion group ran until the early hours of the morning in some cases and the shouts from those arguing their points could be heard throughout the corridors. The discussion group itself was not able to come to a unanimous conclusion and some of the issues were decided by a margin of one or so votes. The discussion lasted so long that the results were not brought to the floor until the congress had almost ended. At that time a 'minority report' which had been mimeographed was distributed to the assembly without previous permission from the chair.<sup>90</sup>

89. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

90. *Ibid.* p. 4.



In this report, the minority stated that it "disagreed absolutely with the majority. . ." for "condemning the action of some countries and silencing the censure of the miseries caused by other regimes."<sup>91</sup> A strongly worded and ideologically committed statement was thus met with an equally strong ideological reaction, each with its own theological justification.

The majority report began with the sociological distinction between a conscious, revolutionary youth and an unconscious, non-revolutionary one. Identifying itself with the former, it went on to describe this "new breed" as one which was not only critical of the existing social, economic, political and cultural reality, but also of the church as an institution that "maintains the *status quo*." Accordingly, this conscious youth "reacts vehemently" against the church for its conservative socio-political stance.<sup>92</sup>

The minority followed the opposite road. Having disassociated itself from the majority, they went on to state that they believed "that Latin American Protestant youth [had] to live individually, in [their respective] communities and in the local congregations where God [had] placed them, bearing witness to their faith."<sup>93</sup> This was followed by a section of thanksgiving to God for the many churches with "fine groups of spiritual young people who have, at the same time, the desire for just solutions to the problems of Latin America."<sup>94</sup> These solutions, however, were found only "in Christ."<sup>95</sup> Those that were not "in the church" could not "find these solutions."<sup>96</sup> To be "spiritual" was to be individually related to Christ, but such a relation could only take place in the church. From this relationship one gained his or her social awareness and the solutions for the ills of this world. The church was thus seen as being set apart from the world but interacting with it through its individual members.

In view of this dichotomous stance, it was no surprise that the minority upheld the Bible as representing a spiritual, political, social and economic code for the solutions of continental problems. "The

91. *Deudores*, p. 44.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

93. *Ibid.*

94. *Ibid.*

95. *Ibid.*

96. *Ibid.*

Bible," it said, "teaches Christian young people and gives them the spiritual, political, social, economic, etc. foundations for the solutions of the problems of the hour in our continent."<sup>97</sup> What are those bases? The report listed five:

1. Jesus Christ-God is the Lord of Latin American men and women. He is also their Saviour and gives eternal life to those who believe in his vicarious sacrifice on the Cross of Calvary.
2. We are against all dictatorships and oppressive governments, of the right or the left, that attack the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God.
3. We are against violence in revolution and also against the bloody repression on the part of governments that condemn to frustration nations that aspire to legitimate and Christian improvements in life.
4. We are in favor of increasing the socio-economic development of Latin America and we are especially against the economic measures of the USA and some European countries that obtain our raw material at despicable prices and sell their manufactured products at confiscatory prices.
5. We are also against the extremist infiltrations in Latin America and believe that in the case of their triumph, they would negate all of the achievements of political democracy, all economic development, social improvements, individual liberty and the practice of our Christian faith.<sup>98</sup>

This statement shows the intrinsic relation obtaining between the minority's ideology and its theology. What was introduced as "biblical foundations" turned out to be ideological affirmations with theological overtones. At the same time, the statement reveals a confused and perplexed socio-theological consciousness. The minority report reflected a sincere faith, a faith which is not able to escape its social consequences. It evidences a social awareness that does not permit passive neutrality. Indeed, the minority group was conscious of the symptoms of imperialism and oppression and recognized that aspirations for a better quality of life are both legitimate and Christian. But they were bewildered by values long recognized as being intrinsically related to the Christian faith and the challenges of the hour. This was complicated by the majority's firmer and clearer understanding of the issues at stake, its socio-theological sophistication and its assumption of a well-defined ideological position with the concomitant signs of intolerance. Such a

97. *Ibid.*

98. *Ibid.*, p. 44, 45.

situation created a state of insecurity and anger in the less sophisticated minority.

Thus, what we have in the minority response is both a *reaction against* what appears to have been interpreted as an *ideological imposition* and a *demonstration of what was actually taking place within the mind* of that sector of the churches that the majority referred to as "the unconscious youth of Latin America."

The feeling of an ideological imposition was not just present among a minority in the Commission on Youth. When the two reports came before the Assembly, similar complaints were aired by representatives of the conservative wing. Francisco Anabalón was reported to have said: "These impositions that we are suffering here reflect the real situation in Latin America."<sup>99</sup> Another speaker was recorded as having said:

Now we see that we are suffering under the pressure of a very subtle minority group that is trying to take us where they wish. If a free expression of ideas is not permitted here on the floor of the Assembly we are going to leave Buenos Aires with more division than we had before the III CELA was called.<sup>100</sup>

These articulate conservatives were able to make their point, however, for in the end the Assembly voted to include both the majority and the minority reports of the Commission on Youth in the official documents.

The III CELA thus revealed a new Protestant consciousness, but not a homogeneous one. It was not freed from controversial issues nor exempted from the influence of the traditional Protestant mentality. Indeed, the III Cella turned out to be a paradoxical conference, and the new consciousness, one full of disparities.

99. Wagner, "Confidential Report," p. 4.

100. *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER V

### THE PARADOX OF THE THIRD LATIN AMERICAN PROTESTANT CONFERENCE (III CELA) AND THE DISPARITIES OF THE NEW PROTESTANT CONSCIOUSNESS

In the previous chapter, it was shown that the new consciousness which the III CELA brought into the limelight carried a new controversy. Not only did the Conference reflect a new line of separation (ideological), however; it also made an effort to justify the differing approaches theologically. Beyond that, the III CELA revealed other disparities that were not so new.

#### INSUFFICIENT CONCRETENESS

In the first place, there was a deficiency in the Conference's analysis of the social, economic and political reality. There were, of course, strong analytical statements which not only underscored the injustice of the present system but denounced its two sustaining bastions and principal beneficiaries: the imperialism of North America and Western Europe and the national oligarchies. In the end, however, these statements ended up being no more than verbal denunciations because they came short of analyzing *the roots* of the System and the way the System *operated* in the concrete situations of the peoples of Latin America. This is why Hector Borrat could say after the III CELA that Protestants needed to analyse "the Latin American situation" still more specifically.<sup>1</sup>

The problem is well illustrated by Arturo Gaete's criticism of Medellín for being politically "undefined." According to him, the course of this indefinitiveness lay in the fact that Medellín limited itself to an "empirical diagnosis" and did not engage in "a genetic and essential" one. That is, it did not organize its empirical findings (the social ills and their immediate objective causes) into a framework that would explain where *in the final analysis* these evils come

1. Borrat, "Protestantism," p. 11.

from and what they consist of in the *deepest* and *most essential* sense. Medellín was not specific enough because its analysis of Latin American social reality was not thorough enough.<sup>2</sup>

The same could be said of the III CELA, which made a similar, though less systematic, analysis. The problem with the III CELA was not that it failed to detect the immediate objective causes of the ills of society, because at least two of the working commissions called attention to the external and internal factors responsible for the socio-economico-political plight of the Latin American masses. It was rather that it failed to analyze these causes deeply enough so as to expose their historical and theoretical roots, to explain why and how they have penetrated all levels of society.

This failure is partly explained by the fact that the III CELA fluctuated between a traditional and a new Protestant mentality. That is, the "new Protestant consciousness" was shown to be a consciousness *en route* which recognized the socio-theological demands of the hour ("the signs of the times"), but the III CELA did not quite know how to respond to these demands. Nor did it have the theoretical equipment and practical means for such a response because it was still imprisoned by traditional categories that bound it to general and ambiguous analyses of social reality.

Míguez-Bonino has shown, in his analysis of the III CELA, that the majority of the documents were consistent with traditional Protestantism in at least three basic directions:

- a) The Christian participation in society takes place primarily through those converted and transformed by the gospel, who at the same time will act upon the structures. Thus, Commission 2 . . . defines 'the prophetic mission of the church,' in the first place, as 'preaching the gospel, . . . provoking thereby a new attitude on the part of the personal man, creating through this means a condition that we consider as basic for any structural renewal.'
- b) The line of change ought to follow the democratic way: 'The democratic ideal continues to be, in our understanding, the most desirable for Latin America' (even though it recognizes the failures and distortions). . .
- c) There is a rejection of any political definition at the level of program or of ideological or partisan tendency. This is left totally to the individual. The Christian's specific role is seen more in terms of 'reconciliation.' Such

2. Arturo Gaete, "Definición e indefinición de la iglesia en política," in Galilea, *La vertiente política*, p. 40.

reconciliation, it is insisted, ought to be grounded on justice, but the church places itself in a sort of situation of transcendence above conflicts, called upon to bring to memory the relativity of our historical options. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Míguez has also demonstrated the emergence of three significantly new lines of thinking at the III CELA:

- a) The acknowledgment of the revolutionary situation and of the just demands of the oppressed, resisted by a system politically, economically and socially repressive and unjust, that is, the factuality of conflict;
- b) the affirmation that the gospel refers not only to personal life (and through it to the structures) but also to the structures of society themselves: 'We believe that God's redemptive action is also destined for the redemption of the structures. . . .';
- c) consequently, the possibility of a revolutionary commitment of Christians. The only document that presents this position coherently is the report of the majority of commission No. 5. . . .: 'This revolutionary sector expects the church to be present in and committed to the Latin American process of humanization, taking the gospel to its ultimate consequences.'<sup>4</sup>

The III CELA, thus, introduced a new socio-analytical perspective, with the concomitant possibility of a new course of action. At the same time, a significant number of participants followed the traditional Protestant view of social reality. Such opposing views led to a collision which in the end was only resolved by parliamentary compromise.

### ECCLESIOLOGICAL DISCREPANCIES

The paradoxical stance assumed by the III CELA was also evident at the level of ecclesiology. To be sure, this was one area in which the Conference reflected a new line of thought. Even so, this new approach was assailed by old positions. Throughout the documents one finds four different ways of speaking about the church: they are sometimes used conjunctively, sometimes separately, and yet other times disjunctively. One finds references to the Church, the church, the churches and the people (freely translated from the Spanish *pueblo* which may mean people [loosely understood as the sum total

3. Míguez-Bonino, "Visión del cambio social," pp. 186, 187.

4. *Deudores*, pp. 23, 26.

of an arbitrary number of individuals] or nation [as a distinct group with a circumscribed history and a collective ethos]).

The term "Church" is sometimes used as a theological concept, as in Commission Two ("To be the Church in Latin America means. . ."; "the prophetic task of the Church is . . ." <sup>5</sup>). It is also used in an institutional sense in reference to Protestantism, as in Commission One ("We [Protestants] are debtors as a Church to Latin America. . .") <sup>6</sup> or Commission Four (" . . . for us as a Latin American Protestant Church" <sup>7</sup>).

Both notions are included in the term church, as in Commission Two ("To be the church is. . ."; "We are a church responsible for . . ." <sup>8</sup>). The term also appears in the plural ("churches") as the ecclesiastical expression of the body of Christ (e.g. "The churches . . . as Christian institutions. . ." <sup>9</sup>).

Finally, there is the word *pueblo*. It is not only used organically (as encompassing Protestant Christians), but also comprehensively (as involving extra-ecclesiastical Protestant institutions). <sup>10</sup>

The lack of clarity in this regard may even be noted in the more missiological references to the church. Thus, there were two distinct views of the church in diaspora – that of Commission Two, which defined the diaspora in terms of individual believers dispersed in mission throughout the world, <sup>11</sup> and that of the majority in Commission Five, for whom the term connoted the church's very nature: a community which exists in dispersion, advancing through life and sharing "the struggles and anguishes of . . . movements that have a similar dynamic." <sup>12</sup>

A similar disparity may be noted between the way Commission One and the minority in Commission Five defined the missionary nature of the church. While the former saw the church as a servant-

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

10. The reference in the Message (*Ibid.*, p. 49.) to "Protestant people" in contra distinction to "the churches" would seem to have in mind such bodies and movements as ISAL, ULAJE, FUMEC, CELADEC, Evangelism in Depth and others, which were not churches and yet existed within the Protestant pale.

11. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

community ("We are debtors in terms of our required faithfulness to the cross and not in a 'triumphalistic' sense"<sup>13</sup>), the youth minority saw it as the key to *all* the problems of the Continent ("We . . . acknowledge that those who are not in the church do not find . . . just solutions to the problems of Latin America . . . because the only answer is to be found in Christ").<sup>14</sup>

These differences in point of view show that the III CELA did not have a clear understanding of the church. In this respect, the Conference reflected the deep-rooted differences which exist among Latin American Protestants in general as to the meaning of the church, and specifically, as to its proper manifestation in the world.

### ECUMENICAL SUPERFICIALITY

Like its predecessors, the III CELA was characterized by an irresistible search for Protestant unity. Unlike the other CELAs, however, it managed not only to draw a truly representative number of participants from the major Protestant sectors but also tried to wrestle with the problem of divisions within and between the churches.

The question of unity was particularly dealt with by Commission One. Recognizing the church's oneness in Christ, the Commission admitted, nevertheless, to the necessity of expressing this fact in concrete ways. "Our problem," it stated, "is how we can manifest to the world this unity; how we can be faithful to this unity in the midst of and despite the diversity and disunity that has characterized us up to now."<sup>15</sup> According to the Commission, one of the fundamental impediments to cooperative action was the state of non communication that has characterized the relations of Protestants with one another. Accordingly, the Commission recommended the intensification of mutual contact between Protestants and the "inter-change of ideas, . . . the pursuit of common research/study and literature distribution programs, the holding of joint conferences, congresses and consultations at various levels, the extension of mutual invitations for the exchange of ideas at national and international levels."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, it recommended the celebration of

13. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 20.



a IV CELA. To carry out the work between the III and the IV CELA, the Commission further recommended the creation of a "continuation organism" to "be sponsored under the combined responsibility of the churches" that had made themselves present at the III CELA.<sup>17</sup>

This latter recommendation had already been made in Lima at the II CELA. At that time, a continuation commission made up of representatives from 14 national councils of churches agreed to form a continuing body by the name: Consultative Commission of the Latin American Protestant Conference.<sup>18</sup> In 1963, the presidents of the national councils of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Perú, México and Uruguay met in Río de Janeiro, with the moral support of their counterparts in Cuba and Puerto Rico, and signed a document that became known as the "Declaration of Corcovado." The Declaration requested all the national councils of churches "to adhere to the idea of creating a 'Latin American organism for Protestant unity in Latin America.'"<sup>19</sup> A year later, UNELAM was created as a "permanent organism for consultations and encounters among the Protestant churches of Latin America."<sup>20</sup> This was officialized in 1965 at a constituent assembly in Campinas, Brazil.<sup>21</sup>

The III CELA addressed itself to this new body, UNELAM. In a tripartite resolution, the Assembly expressed its appreciation for the work which UNELAM had performed theretofore. First, it exhorted UNELAM, and those churches which had not yet related themselves officially to it – or "to the movement for Protestant unity which UNELAM was trying to be an incarnation" – to "intensify their contact and dialogue with one another..."<sup>22</sup> Secondly, it commended to UNELAM the promotion of "the common insights and concerns" reflected in the III CELA documents.<sup>23</sup> And thirdly, it asked UNELAM to organize and coordinate the IV CELA and conduct regional encounters in preparation for it.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Cf. *Cristo, la esperanza*, pp. 168, 169.

19. Marcelo Pérez-Rivas, "El ecumenismo en América Latina," in Norman Goodall, *El movimiento ecuménico* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1971), p. 227.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 278.

21. Cf. UNELAM, *Preguntas y respuestas acerca de UNELAM* (Buenos Aires: Departamento de Publicaciones de UNELAM, n.d.), p. 7.

22. *Deudores*, p. 58.

23. *Ibid.*

The practical implication of this resolution was the eventual transformation of UNELAM from a "provisional commission" to an organized movement. Thus in June 1970 it was organized as a regional ecumenical coordinating body, with the idea of making it the Latin American counterpart of the present-day Christian Conference of Asia.<sup>24</sup>

This resolution, however, contains a fundamental ecumenical error: it failed to acknowledge and take account of the other side of the Latin American ecclesial reality, namely, the para-ecclesiastical organizations and movements which the organizing committee had sought to involve in the work of the Conference. The Assembly probably had this larger reality of the church in mind when it addressed the Message of the Conference to the "Protestant people of Latin America" and to "the churches..."<sup>25</sup> Why then did the resolution not make any reference to the para-church structures? Was it simply a *lapsus lingua*, or was it the intrusion of a view of the church which excludes the notion of non-ecclesiastical Christian institutions, movements and/or events as historical expressions of the church and, therefore, does not feel the need to take them into account as fundamental components of the ecumenical world?

Both the internal and the external evidence seems to indicate that it probably was a *lapsus lingua*, but then one which reflected a dominant ecclesiological notion and ecumenical attitude in Mainline Protestantism. For one thing, UNELAM has from its beginning been led by and made up of Mainline Protestant leaders and churches. Moreover, while it is true, as has been shown, that there were many Evangelicals and Pentecostals present at the III CELA, it was Mainline Protestants who exercised the greatest influence at the level of the commissions, in the drafting committees and in the parliamentary process.<sup>26</sup>

It cannot be disputed that at the III CELA Mainline Protestants tried very hard to accept the fact that both the origins of Latin

24. Cf. De Santa Ana, *Protestantismo*, p. 138, where he states that UNELAM "could come to fulfill in Latin America the same role that the Christian Conference of East Asia has fulfilled in the Asian southeast."

25. *Deudores*, p. 49.

26. According to Wagner, "the evangelicals [among which he would include the Pentecostals] were poorly organized and were not well aware of the central issues which were presented in the congress." "Confidential Report," p. 2.

American Protestantism and the practical application of whatever ecumenical relations it had been able to maintain had mostly been made possible through issue-oriented projects coordinated by para-ecclesiastical organizations.<sup>27</sup> Even so, Mainline churches have always found it hard to live with this fact.<sup>28</sup> At the III CELA, they thus seemed to have accepted it only as a temporary *modus operandi*, hoping that it might be overcome in the future as *churches* (of whatever Protestant persuasion and origin) intensify their communication with one another and their dialogue with UNELAM. This explains why UNELAM is referred to in the resolution as an inter-ecclesiastical commission: because only an inter-*church* body can serve as the vehicle for the ecumenical relations of the churches.

Additional light is thrown on this matter by the attitude reflected

27. Pérez-Rivas, who questions the validity of the para-ecclesiastical organisms on a continuing basis, recognizes, nevertheless, that (1) they have played a fundamental role in the Ecumenical Movement and (2) they have often broken "the *impasse*" between churches of radically different traditions and the ineffectiveness of many national councils of churches to get concrete projects done. Thus, the first continental-wide ecumenical body was ULAJE, and projects such as the studies carried out during the 50's by MEC and during the 60's by ISAL would not have been possible if it were not for the fact that they had been sponsored by issue-oriented entities. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 219f., 236.

28. Mortimer Arias provides an interesting example of this latent reality in a lecture which he delivered in São Paulo, Brazil. Referring to the presence of para-ecclesiastical groups, he states:

"For my part, it seems to me that we ought to respect and even encourage these 'para-ecclesiastical' groups even when we are not totally in agreement with them. History demonstrates how in these groups — which are sometimes extreme and difficult to direct for the official church — the Spirit of God has been moving. Not recognizing them, combating them, we run the risk of not listening to a prophetic voice that has been given to us. And we know that the prophets are not easy to hear. But I also believe that the prophets speak from within the Church and not from the outside. Those who called themselves prophets and are not willing to be confronted by the rest of the Church run the risk of being 'false prophets,' 'dreamers and guessers,' too drunk on pride and self-sufficiency to receive the correction of God that comes through the brethren of the community."

Mortimer Arias, "Implicaciones sociales del protestantismo," in "La Iglesia en el contexto latinoamericano," Lectureship series given at the Facultad Metodista de Teología, São Paulo, Brazil (26 de mayo de 1971), p. 9 (mimeographed). For a German edition of these lectures, see *Die hellen Schatten: Evangelische Christen in Südamerika*, trans. by Reinhard Brose (Zürich/ Stuttgart: Gotthelf-Verlag, n.d.).

in the Conference toward ISAL and the silence that was observed in relation to CLADE, both expressions of para-ecclesiastical Protestantism, albeit with radically different theological outlooks.

ISAL, which went to the III CELA with a prepared position paper ("On the Life of the Churches and the Ecumenical Movement in Latin America"), was met with resistance by many of the Conference participants. In its paper, ISAL stated:

... one of the most persistent habits [in Latin American Protestantism] ... is that of confusing the structures with which we learn to denominate the 'churches' with the community of the Spirit. . . [But ] if the Spirit is like the wind (we cannot control Him) so is the *community* of the Spirit. We cannot imprison it. It flies from the structures with which we think to contain it and forms new structures by which to express itself . . . The fundamental problem is, then, to discover what are the *marks* of the Spirit, because they will determine the marks of the community. Where is the community of the Spirit? The answer: wherever the signs of His activity are manifested. In the words of Jesus: 'Thus you will know them by their fruits' (Mt. 7:20).<sup>29</sup>

Such a position, representative of the charismatic line of the Reformation, but from which ISAL drew a not-so-traditional conclusion,<sup>30</sup> was not very well received by the Conference. This was perhaps most dramatically illustrated in the account of the reaction

29. "Sobre la vida de las iglesias y el movimiento ecuménico en América Latina: Una posición de ISAL" (Montevideo: ISAL, 1969), p. 4.

30. Later the statement goes on to affirm:

"The community of the Spirit. . . cannot be defined in legal, intellectual or structural terms. Logically these elements have their place, but a subordinated one: only as *instruments of love*. . . As expression and instrument of the love of God, the community does not exist. . . unless it participates in the sufferings of Christ, in the sighings of the Spirit, in the transforming activity of God whereby the Kingdom is made present. . . To be consistent with the affirmation that love is the very *being* of the community, and not a commandment that is added *a posteriori* we have to make clear that we are not saying simply that 'The Church ought to participate in the divine activity for the transformation of the world.' As if this ecclesial reality could exist apart from participation in this dynamic. We wish simply to indicate that it is exactly where there is a community of love committed to God in that which He is doing to give us 'a future and a hope' that one finds the community of the Spirit. . .

This means at the same time, that those communities that find themselves committed to one and the same obedience discover themselves reconciled with one another. Nothing separates them. They are expressions of the one and only body of Christ." (*Ibid.*, pp. 4-7.)

of one delegate to Rubem Alves' interlocution on behalf of ISAL. He was asked, "In whose authority does ISAL work, anyway?" To which question Alves replied: "It's interesting that Jesus was asked a similar question by the Pharisees!"<sup>31</sup>

In the case of CLADE, it was what was *not* said rather than what was said that seems to have carried a note of the Assembly's disapproval. In a penetrating piece of criticism Plutarco Bonilla points out, among other things, that while CLADE ignored the III CELA and attempted to set itself up as a rival conference, the III CELA also clearly ignored CLADE! They were both guilty of what he called "the metaphysical sin": the negation of their mutual existence.<sup>32</sup>

At the heart of CLADE's and the III CELA's apparent denial of each other's existence there appears to have been among their respective organizing leaderships a profound suspicion of one another's motives. The CLADE leadership seems mostly to have seen the III CELA as a meeting controlled and manipulated by "ecumenists" and "radical theologians" who were gearing the churches to give support to their ecumenical dream, namely, that of building up a powerful regional ecumenical body. For the III CELA leadership, CLADE appears to have been a North American-inspired and -directed Evangelical gathering. Beyond their mutual suspicion, which did contain a measure of truth,<sup>33</sup> both events reflected

31. Relayed to me by Plutarco Bonilla in a personal conversation during CLADE, Bogotá, Colombia, November, 1969.

32. Bonilla, "Reflexiones sobre el CLADE," p. 9. Emilio Castro (Cf. Letter, February 2, 1975) denies that the III CELA ignored CLADE. According to him, a motion was voted in the Assembly to send a fraternal greeting to CLADE from the III CELA. But this is something which the published documents do not mention, nor is it brought out in Wagner's extensive report. But even if such a message was indeed sent, there was no mention of it made at CLADE. It could be that the motion was passed by the Assembly, but for some reason or other was never executed.

33. According to Emilio Castro, the III CELA's silence on CLADE was neither total nor belicose. It was rather due to the fact that the III CELA "hardly knew anything beyond the theme of CLADE and that the organization was in the hands of North Americans." (*Ibid.*) Castro is basically correct in the latter part of his statement if one bears in mind that one of CLADE's co-presidents was Clyde Taylor, a North American Evangelical leader. The suspicion on the part of the CLADE leadership was more implicit than explicit inasmuch as the Congress was designed as an evangelistic meeting. But the fact that practically all of the Mainline ecumenical leaders were excluded from the

opposite views as to what constitutes true Christian ecumenicity. For the leadership of CLADE true ecumenicity was grounded on individual, "born again" Christians engaged in common Christian tasks, chief among which was evangelism.<sup>34</sup> For the leadership of the III CELA, ecumenicity was basically an inter-church enterprise. Thus, while the former stressed individual participants, the III CELA emphasized ecclesiastical representatives. All of this underscores the fact that the matter of delegated ecclesiastical authority is a concern which Mainline Protestantism will and cannot easily shake off, just as the question of personal experience and doctrinal commitment will not and cannot be brushed lightly aside in the ecumenicity of Evangelical and Pentecostal Protestants.

If this is a valid observation, the III CELA must be taken to task for its superficial treatment of the problem of Protestant divisions. The Conference's concern with an unnecessarily divided Protestantism on account of foreign influence is, to be sure, well taken. But is it not equally true that this problem is but a part of a larger problem: a society whose deepest divisions have come as a result of foreign interests and concerns? Does this not mean, then, that the problem of divisions has to be seen in relation to its manifestation in society and not just in the church? To criticize the foreign influence in the church without questioning at the same time the foreign cultural<sup>35</sup>

Congress, that no reference whatever was made to organizations like UNELAM and that even the more radical Evangelicals (like René Padilla and Plutarco Bonilla) were barred from the program may be indicative of nothing more than the tight organizational structure of the Congress. On the other hand, Wagner's contention that the III CELA was basically run by ecumenists and radical Mainliners (Cf. "Confidential Report," p. 2) was not merely the reaction of a North American Evangelical missionary; it was the general impression of many of the Evangelical leaders who, along with Clyde Taylor, Wagner himself and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, were to take the leadership at CLADE four months later.

34. Cf. the "Evangelical Declaration of Bogotá," especially the first and second paragraph, in *Acción en Cristo*, p. 134.

35. Cf., for example, Daniel Camacho, *La dominación cultural en el desarrollo* (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1972) where the thesis is sustained that underdevelopment, particularly in Latin America, cannot exist apart from a process of cultural domination. For a comprehensive analysis of how the presence of this phenomenon has filtered into Latin American Protestantism, see De Santa Ana, *Protestantismo*, especially chapter II: "El protestantismo y su situación en la cultura actual".

domination of Latin American society is to continue in the vicious circle of diagnosing the symptom rather than the cause of the illness.

But it is not even enough to say that the problem has its roots in the cultural domination of Latin America, because the latter would not be possible if it were not for the traditional alliance between foreign powers and local oligarchies. The philosophy of "divide and rule" manifests itself in the church as much as in society in general. It is a fundamental trait of Latin America. Of course the III CELA recognized this phenomenon when, after exhorting the church to get rid of its foreign garments, it admitted that this could "perhaps present a new pluralism, but in this case, born out of the Latin American diversity."<sup>36</sup> What it did not take into account was that the present "pluralism" was in many ways an authentic expression of the Latin American reality. There is no better example of indigeneity than the Chilean Pentecostal movement. It is impossible, however, to understand the latter without an understanding of Wesleyan Methodism (foreign influence) and Chilean cultural patterns (indigeneity).

In other words, the leadership of the III CELA did not probe deeply enough into the problem of divisions among Protestants. Their overpowering search for unity seems to have betrayed their diagnosis of the problem. C. Peter Wagner was partially right when he criticized the leadership of the Conference for operating on an "unrealistic assumption." He states that the III CELA made a fundamental mistake in assuming that the differences between Protestants in Latin America were "superficial, and 'imported' from the Anglo Saxon countries" and that they could be overcome by a simple "bringing together in harmony" those who were in disagreement. "The attempt to do this in five of the six documents," he added, "resulted in a mediocre product, not fully satisfactory" to any of the groupings of Protestants present at the Conference.<sup>37</sup>

But if the problem of divisions was not as simple as the leadership of the III CELA seemed to have thought, neither does the ecumenical strategy outlined in the resolution appear to be sufficiently meaningful and relevant. For it too reflects an inadequate consideration of the meaning and possibilities of Protestant — not to

36. *Deudores*, p. 18.

37. Wagner, "Confidential Report," p. 12.

speak of Christian – unity in the concrete reality of Latin America. In fact, the III CELA's resolute search for unity did not represent a *thoroughly* Latin American quest, for such an undertaking would have required a much more *comprehensive* and *realistic* approach. As early as 1967 Míguez-Bonino had suggested that in Latin American Protestantism the search for unity should follow a "nominalistic strategy," which he defined as a determining of

... the places and circumstances in which partial but precise efficacious manifestations of the quality of coexistence that is given to us in Jesus Christ can be concentrated in different spheres, through different ways and with different groups of persons.<sup>38</sup>

And the Assembly followed this suggestion when it requested UNELAM to sponsor "regional encounters" in preparation for a IV CELA.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, its imprecise analysis of the causes of divisions, its apparent preference for a limited ecumenicity, defined in terms of ecclesiastical structures, and its drive toward an ecumenical synthesis<sup>60</sup> without seriously considering its immediate and long-range possibilities – these are all factors that witness to a superficial approach reflective of old blind spots in the ecumenical outlook of Mainline Protestantism.

38. José Míguez-Bonino, *Integración humana y unidad cristiana – Conferencias Ecueménicas Núm. 1* (Río Piedras: Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico, 1969), p. 86.

39. *Deudores*, p. 48.

40. Wagner was right in stating that such a synthesis is impossible, though for the time being, I would argue rather than permanently. Furthermore, he is probably right in suggesting that "a better approach would have been to allow an honest expression" in the Assembly of the different "points of view" so that each side "could better understand the other and live together in love and respect but not to pretend that the divergencies can be brought together." ("Confidential Report," p. 12.) Whether such advice should be made a permanent rule for Latin American Protestantism is debatable, however, especially from the point of view of faith. It is biblically and theologically doubtful whether polarization should be given a "healthy" status, as Wagner seems to argue. The church's historical failure ("Church history shows us clearly that when the Church leaves strong convictions it becomes nominal and ceases to grow and develop." *Ibid.*) does not make its divisions right. Unity is something which the church has been exhorted to maintain with all eagerness (Eph. 4:3) and its divisions are nothing to be proud of. They are painful results of sincere attempts to be faithful to the gospel. Painful as they are, however, they should not be treated lightly and superficially. They should be dealt with with all seriousness.



### MISSIOLOGICAL INCONSISTENCIES

To the lack of analytical concreteness, the ambiguous understanding of the church and the III CELA's ecumenical superficiality must be added a fourth deficiency, namely, that of a truncated missiology. As it has been shown, the III CELA did take several steps forward in its missiological reflection. Its forward movement, however, was arrested by at least two missiological inconsistencies.

One such inconsistency had to do with the way the Conference dealt with the question of evangelization. Though not lacking by any means in evangelistic zeal, it limited itself to a discussion of the content and ethical demands of the evangelistic task, leaving practically untouched such issues as unevangelized areas and evangelistic strategy and methods.

That the practice of evangelization in Latin America has been beset by a theologically weak message is something that has been pointed out ever since the II CELA, which had addressed itself to this specific problem.<sup>41</sup> In his comments during the Hayward-Strachan debate on Evangelism in Depth,<sup>42</sup> Emilio Castro had clearly underscored the need of reflecting on the kind of message that should be proclaimed. Two years before, the Presbyterian Church had held a continental consultation on "The Nature and Mission of the Church in Latin America," which underscored the theological weakness of evangelization in Latin America.<sup>43</sup> In 1966 the Methodist Church in Latin America conducted a consultation which gathered a wealth of material on the content of evangelization.<sup>44</sup> Then there were the studies on "the Missionary Structure

41. *Cristo, la esperanza*, pp. 67-92, 121-132.

42. Cf. Emilio Castro, "Evangelism in Latin America," in *International Review of Mission*, LIII (October, 1964). This was a debate that grew out of R. K. Strachan's article, "A Call to Witness," in *Ibid.*, LIII (April, 1964), in which he gave an account of the Evangelism in Depth Movement in Latin America, outlining its fundamental theological presuppositions. Victor Hayward responded in the same issue with "Call to Witness - But What Kind of Witness?", challenging Strachan's notion of a witness defined primarily in terms of verbal communication. Other writers were invited to participate in the debate including Marcus Barth and Emilio Castro, with Leslie Newbigin serving as moderator.

43. Gonzalo Castillo Cárdenas, ed., *La naturaleza de la iglesia y su misión en Latinoamérica* (Bogotá: CCPAL, 1963).

44. Mortimer Arias, ed., *Evangelización y revolución en América Latina* (Montevideo: Iglesia Metodista en América Latina, 1969).

of the Church" undertaken by the Center for Christian Studies of the River Plate in connection with the larger, worldwide study sponsored by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelization of the WCC.<sup>45</sup> It was, therefore, natural to find throughout the III CELA an emphasis on the content of the evangelistic message.

This emphasis was accompanied by a useful critique, noted in the previous chapter, of the distorted images of Christ that are often transmitted in evangelistic efforts. There was also a commendable effort to correlate the message with the struggle for justice, the search for identity and indigeneity and the quest for the "new man" which had permeated the thinking of the revolutionary leaders of the Continent.<sup>46</sup> In this context, one finds throughout the III CELA documents a theme that can be traced back to the writings of Emilio Castro: *i.e.*, the call to repentance and faith as a call to a militant discipleship that commits itself to Christ in solidarity with the poor and the disenfranchised.<sup>47</sup>

It has been shown, moreover, how the III CELA stressed the need for new evangelistic methods that would make it possible to keep abreast of the changing situations of Latin American society and that called attention to the need of incarnating the gospel, personally and collectively, in everyday Latin American life. The Conference underscored the fact that for proclamation of the gospel in Latin America,

45. *Id por el mundo* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1966).

46. Cf., for example, Ernesto Che Guevara, "El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba," *Obra revolucionaria*, pp. 627ff. From a Christian perspective, see José María González Ruíz, *Marxismo y cristianismo frente al hombre nuevo* (Madrid: Marova, 1971) and the excellent popular work of José Míguez-Bonino, *Ama y haz lo que quieras: Una ética para el hombre nuevo* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1972).

47. One of the first places where this line of thought is found in the thought of Castro is in his paper, "Conversion and Social Transformation," prepared for the study that the Department of Church and Society of the World Council of Churches carried out between 1962-66 in preparation for the World Conference on Church and Society (1966). In Spanish, the Castro essay appeared in 1970 in *Hacia una revolución responsable* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1970), pp. 159ff. The same type of thinking can be found, however, in Castro's first collection of sermons, "*Cuando molesta la conciencia. . .*" (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1962), especially p. 33f. It is developed further in "A Call to Action," in Thomas E. Quizley, ed., *Freedom and Unfreedom in the Americas* (New York: IDOC, 1971), pp. 38ff.; *Realidad y fe* (Montevideo: Tierra Nueva, 1972); and *Hacia una pastoral latinoamericana* (San José: Publicaciones INDEF, 1974).

and anywhere in the world for that matter, more is required than mere boldness, knowledge and a powerful rhetoric. The proclamation of the gospel needs to be accompanied by the credentials of an authentic Christian life. Accordingly, there was at the III CELA a strong warning to those who seek mere numerical growth, to those who, it could perhaps be said, tended toward taking pride in the flesh rather than giving the glory to God.

It is striking, then, that in spite of this stress on the evangelistic imperative, the content of the gospel and its ethical demands, the III CELA failed to underline the evangelistic needs of the world. There was hardly any discussion on the still existing unevangelized regions of the Continent, the continental process of de-Christianization or the specific evangelistic challenges of the revolutionary situation of Latin America.<sup>48</sup> No evangelistic resolution was approved, no concrete goals set, no strategic concerns expressed. Even though evangelization was seen as a fundamental biblical motif of unity<sup>49</sup> and despite the devotional messages of Ruben Loes stressing the importance of "unity in action,"<sup>50</sup> there was no mention in the resolution passed of evangelization as a road toward Protestant unity. This failure was especially tragic given the historical role which evangelization has played in Latin America as a rallying point for cooperative action.<sup>51</sup>

48. To be sure, Commission Two made reference to "the 15 million displaced or dispossessed and/or exploited aborigines who await redemption and justice" (*Deudores*, p. 24.) as well as to those who have lost the faith or have had little access to it on account of the church's lack of commitment to resolution of the social disparities of Latin America. Míguez-Bonino, in his address, mentioned the fact that "in our continent there is a growing mass of people who have not come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. . ." ("Our Debt," p. 310.) Commission Three pointed out the emotional and social problems involved in the rural exodus and migration to the city; Commission Four mentioned the extreme hardships suffered by the Latin American woman; and the majority report of Commission Five reminded the Assembly of the youth exodus from the church and the ecclesial marginalization of the rural, working and student youth. These references, however, touched this complex evangelistic issue only superficially. Indeed, *in comparison* with the II CELA, the Third gave hardly any attention at all to this vital issue. Cf. *Cristo, la esperanza*, pp. 92-110, 133-147.

49. In fact, Commission One grounded its first recommendation on the well-known unity passage in Jn. 17:21, linking the ecumenical concern to the church's witnessing vocation. (*Deudores*, p. 20.)

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

51. It is a known fact that in Latin American Protestant circles no other

That the III CELA did not bother to enlist the help of the other continental organizations represented therein and limited itself instead to requesting UNELAM to promote the concerns which had been aired in the commissions seems rather strange to say the least. Either the leadership did not understand the complexity of the issues or it overestimated the capacity of UNELAM.

Be that as it may, a missiological flaw was quite apparent: a gap between theological reflection on mission, on the one hand, and strategic planning for mission, on the other. For all its attempt to create a new missiological language (mission as a debt to be paid to and within the totality of Latin American society, with the Incarnation as model), the III CELA failed to deal in concrete terms with the problem of how to help Protestantism mend its ways and pay its long-standing missionary debt to the Continent. The III CELA had access to several (Mainline *and* Evangelical) continent-wide organizational resources. But instead of asking itself how these resources could be matched with the needs outlined (in the form of issues and recommendations) by the study commissions, the Assembly chose to place all these needs into one bag, as it were, and hand them over to UNELAM for promotion among the churches.<sup>52</sup> In so doing, it truncated the missiological process of the Conference.

activity, with the possible exception of the distribution of Scripture (which itself, of course, has definite evangelistic overtones), has managed to bring so many Protestant Christians together as mass evangelistic rallies and crusades.

52. While I agree with Castro that the CELAs have been designed as "encounters" of all the tendencies of Latin American Protestantism, rather than as "strategy" conferences (Letter, February 27, 1975), they have not been able to avoid the practical problem of how to follow up the issues raised in each. This was especially evident at the II CELA, which was preceded by the First Continental Conference on Church and Society, (from which ISAL took its rise) and by a continental consultation on Christian Education (which became the launching pad for CELADEC). Confronted with the need for a continuing fellowship between conferences, the II CELA made possible the coming into being of the Consultative Commission which, in turn, made possible the coming into being of UNELAM. And while Castro is basically right in arguing that the III CELA was not expected to form a continuation organism (*Ibid.*), it seems quite clear that the "birth" of a continuation committee was more "unexpected" by the coordinating agency (UNELAM) and the Conference's leadership than by the Conference participants. UNELAM saw itself as a direct descendant of the II CELA, a self-image that appears to have been reinforced by the strong support it received from the Conference's leadership. (This should be of no surprise if one

If what happened in Buenos Aires in July 1969 was fairly representative of the state of Latin American Protestantism – and the evidence seems to indicate that it was – then the consciousness with which Protestants in general and Mainliners in particular entered the 70's was full of discrepancies. Even so, it was a critical consciousness featuring new lines of thought which made possible new missiological developments. The next part of this study will examine these developments in the Mainline Protestantism of the post-III CELA period.

remembers that the President of the III CELA was also the President of UN-ELAM). This being so, the Conference made no effort to wrestle with the problem of how best to follow up the recommendations of the commissions and deal with the critical issues they raised.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE QUEST FOR CONCRETENESS IN MISSION

#### *Section I: The Case of the Churches*

The missiological concerns (and disparities) of the III CELA were carried over, in varying degrees, into the 70's as three new trends emerged. These trends characterize the missiological thought of the period. There was, firstly, the question of concreteness in mission; secondly, the issue of authentic ecumenism; and thirdly, the problem of missiological depth. In this and the next three chapters attention will be given to the first of these.

The question of concreteness in mission appeared in the form of a quest for a more engaging participation in and a more historical interpretation of God's mission in the concrete reality of Latin America. A struggle toward this end can thus be witnessed at the national and continental level, in the churches as well as the leading ecumenical organizations. The first item in the analysis of this quest is to consider the situation as reflected in the churches.

#### THE EVANGELICAL METHODIST CHURCH IN BOLIVIA

The most notable example among the churches is that of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Boliva (EMCB). For this is a church which, in its short history as an autonomous national church, has tried to work out a "theory of missionary praxis" grounded on its concrete reality. A landmark of this theory is the document "An Easter Manifesto to the Bolivian Nation," which was released by the Church authorities on Easter Sunday, 1970.<sup>1</sup>

1. Cf. Mortimer Arias, "An Easter Manifesto to the Bolivian Nation" (La Paz: Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia, 1970), (mimeographed); also in Emilio Castro, *Amidst Revolution*, trans. by James and Margaret Goff (Belfast: Christian Journals Limited, 1975), pp. 80-99. For the purpose of clarity, I have compared both translations with one another, using the version that seems the clearest. Page references, however, are limited to the EMCB's mimeographed translation.

*"An Easter Manifesto to the Bolivian Nation"*

Originally presented to the President of the Republic in a private audience, the publication of the Manifesto was the way the EMCB chose to make itself known to the Bolivian nation and to the rest of the world as an *autonomous* church. It became the church's "social creed."

Four years later Bishop Mortimer Arias, in his message to the General Assembly of the Church, evaluated the first quadrennium in the light of the aims of the Church as stated in the Manifesto. He made it quite clear that this document was far from being a mere verbal affirmation. According to him, the Manifesto was

a flag planted in enemy territory to be conquered – the goal toward which [the Church] must move if [it wishes] to be consistent. In truth, in the last few years [the Church has had] to face the challenge of living as [the] Manifesto states.<sup>2</sup>

The Manifesto is divided into four main sections. In the first, the Church describes (and defines) itself as a *Bolivian Christian Church*, born out of the 16th century Protestant Reformation and heir of the 18th century Wesleyan Spiritual Renewal Movement. It is a community committed to Jesus Christ and, therefore, to man; to the whole of man and to all of mankind, but especially to Bolivian men and women. Though a product of the missionary movement, the Church sees itself as having come of age as an autonomous church with its own Bolivian "version of Christianity."<sup>3</sup>

In the second section, the Church explains its *raison d'être*: it "is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ which implies the full humanization of man, the carrying out of God's purpose for the man he has created and redeemed."<sup>4</sup> Jesus Christ is said to be the prototype of the authentic man: whole, free, fully developed in his calling, mission

2. Mortimer Arias, "The Bishop's State-of-the-Church Message," Report submitted to the III General Assembly of the Evangelical Methodist Church, Cochabamba, Bolivia, January 9, 1974 (mimeographed), p. 1.

3. Manifesto, p. 1. For a concise historical account of the history of Protestantism in Bolivia, see EMCB, "The Protestant Church in Bolivia," in *The Future of the Missionary Enterprise*, No. 11-12: *Gospel and Violence: Bolivia* (Rome: IDOC, 1974), pp. 16ff. In the same volume, see Mortimer Arias, "The State of the Methodist Church" [1969], pp. 64ff.; Inter Press Service, "Survey of the Protestant Church in Bolivia," pp. 96ff. Cf. also, C. Peter Wagner, *The Protestant Movement in Bolivia* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1970).

4. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

and destiny. But man has fallen short of that humanity represented by Christ. Alienated from him or herself and his or her neighbor, man has lost his or her human vocation. Lost in his or her personal sins, he or she has felt the weight of sin in society, becoming the victim of alienating structures that further dehumanize and condition him or her to physical and social misery. That is why the thrust of the gospel is one of liberation. The gospel announces a message of liberation from personal captivity and the structures of alienation. To proclaim, celebrate and live this reality is the task of the Christian church. "Our obligation is to proclaim this message," says the Manifesto, "if we do not want to be found unworthy of our mission and our name."<sup>5</sup>

Having explicated the Church's identity and mission, the Manifesto goes on to interpret, in section three, the Bolivian reality. It states unashamedly that this interpretation is made *in the light* of the gospel: "When we look at our Bolivian reality in the light of the Gospel, we are faced with the spectacle of a chronic, heart-rending, dehumanization."<sup>6</sup>

This does not mean that the Manifesto stays on the religious, spiritual, plane. Rather, true to the historical character of the gospel, it analyzes carefully the concrete reality. It underscores the "backwardness and underdevelopment" of the country "with the lowest per capita income in all of Latin America"; its state of "underconsumption"; the inhuman situation of its miners, "macabre witnesses of generations sacrificed in the prime of life, leaving, after eight or ten years of production, their skeletons and families of orphans and widows abandoned to the most abject helplessness. . ."; the "three million peasants" who are separated from the ruling elite "by illiteracy and poverty and treated as mere disposable objects by the insensitive bureaucracy and political leadership"; the "thousands of children without any schools"; the unending lines of unemployed college graduates; and the constant brain drainage.<sup>7</sup>

Such a clear cut description of the symptoms of the Bolivian situation is followed by a courageous analysis of its causes. "At the bottom of this situation," it states, "are international oppressive structures," supported by "internal exploiters, privileged minorities

5. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*



of Bolivians who are in connivance with international and anti-national interests."<sup>8</sup> Blame for this situation is placed upon bureaucratic governmental organizations; corrupt politicians and civil servants; "the desire for quick wealth; the lack of responsibility and discipline; the cowardliness that hinders [the Bolivian people from committing themselves] responsibly"; personal and group rivalries; "the instability of our government; the inconsequence of opposition groups and political parties; and the lack of continuity in effort — these are . . . undeniable causes of our backwardness."<sup>9</sup>

The Manifesto recognizes, of course, the great values of Bolivian life and the positive aspects of the then existing regime (the moderate nationalist government of General Ovando).<sup>10</sup> But it also underscores several aspects of the behavior of the ruling order which concern and disturb the Church: Such things as the excessive militarization of government along with the concomitant danger of "Messianism and military fascism"; the lack of popular participation in the government; the authoritarian and inequitable legal and judicial system evidenced by "the indefinite suspension of the Constitution," the lack of a representative legislature and the submission of the judicial power to the *de facto* government; the contradictions between the nationalistic commitment of the government and measures that seem to indicate an antinational policy, "such as the continuation of the North American Mission and Military Aid, or the unfulfilled promise of political amnesty and freedom with the political leaders who tried to return to the country."<sup>11</sup>

Yet, the Church acknowledges "a highly positive balance in the present revolutionary government."<sup>12</sup> Convinced, therefore, of the fact that in spite of its fallibility it has the moral obligation of declaring itself "even at the risk of being mistaken," the Manifesto states "that it is necessary to give to the present Bolivian government

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

10. According to Bishop Arias, General Torres, who several months later was to set up a short-lived leftist government, was by the side of Ovando when the Manifesto was read and presented to him. Cf. Mortimer Arias, Private interview held during meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Church, Figueira da Foz, Portugal, February 3-7, 1975.

11. Manifesto, p. 4.

12. *Ibid.*

the opportunity to fulfill its task within the stated lineaments."<sup>13</sup>

Accordingly, the EMCB declares itself, in the fourth section of its social creed, willing and desirous of participating "in the constructive process of preparing a new tomorrow for our Bolivian people."<sup>14</sup> To this end, it puts all of its human resources at the service of the Bolivian nation "in collaboration with all Christians in Bolivia, and also with those who are now Christian but who feel the same call to work together for a more dignified human life."<sup>15</sup>

As proof of this commitment, the Manifesto lists those things which the Church is already doing in the service of the Bolivian man: educational programs, national efforts to combat illiteracy, the promotion of health and social development programs. But it recognizes that such endeavors are not sufficient.

We must work for radical changes in the structures of society which affect human life... Consequently, we assign a principal place to the task of *concientización* (making our people aware). The liberation of man will not be accomplished unless he [or she] is previously liberated from his [or her] admiration for his [or her] oppressor and his [or her] imitation of foreign ways.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, the Manifesto affirms that the most significant contribution the EMCB can make as a church "is to participate in the formation of a new Bolivian man, truly humanized by the Gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>17</sup> Such a contribution will require a "leap" forward in the evangelistic and educational practice of the church. To be sure, says the Manifesto, the Protestant churches have contributed toward the formation of a moral, sober, honest, hard-working man.

But the Christian man is much more than the prototype of sobriety. He is a free man, without alienations, conscious of his possibilities and of his responsibility to take his destiny in his own hands.<sup>18</sup>

The Manifesto thus comes out for an integral evangelization; which "initiates man on the road to his full humanization," and the complementary task "of proclamation and confrontation with a

13. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

sustained and systematic effort of education and *concientización* of [the] Bolivian man."<sup>19</sup>

With this missiological reflection *and* commitment, the EMCB initiates its ministry as an autonomous ecclesiastical body. That it was not just a verbal pronouncement can be appreciated by the fact that four years later the Church had more than doubled its membership (from 1,988 to 4,264), had intensified its work among the Aymara Indians (helping them to develop an autochthonous liturgical, congregational and missionary style), had intensified the development of lay leadership, had suffered patiently the forced exile of some of its top leaders on account of their prophetic role, the threat of expulsion for several others and a constant climate of suspicion and scrutiny.<sup>20</sup> Yet, constrained to "offer" its "silence" "for the good of Bolivia and the unity of the" body,<sup>21</sup> the Church has continued to serve the people through its medical, educational and rural ministries coupled with a vigorous evangelistic and discipleship effort.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Arias, "Bishop's Message," p. 7. For two critical comments on the impact of the Banzer coup on the EMCB, see Mortimer Arias, "The Church and Revolution," pp. 74ff.; and Jim and Marilaine Jones, "Banzer's Coup and the Bolivian Evangelical Methodist Church," pp. 85ff., both in IDOC, *Bolivia*.

21. *Ibid.*, 5. This is a reference to "the serious debates and confrontations" that Míguez-Bonino says have been provoked "in the very churches" that produced this and similar declarations. ("Visión del cambio social," p. 193). According to Arias, the problem is twofold: (1) a lack of adequate knowledge of the Manifesto at the level of the grass roots, and even at the level of the leadership, and (2) an inadequate commitment to its affirmations. This is reflective of what he has described as an "ideological crisis," *i.e.*, "a kind of confusion on the concrete objectives and options of the church in a given historical situation." Thus the silence with which the IV Assembly met the question, "How long will we continue offering our silence?" Yet, this is a crisis which the EMCB is at least attempting to deal with at the highest and deepest levels of the Church, as the "Reflections on the March" shared by the Bishop with the General Board and the National Commissions on January 8th show. He adds that in spite of the impressive signs of vitality during the year 1974 (*e.g.*, 12 new preaching outposts, 10 new congregations organized, 10 excellent candidates for the pastoral ministry, 104 local "lay" preachers, a strong stewardship development evident in the growing number of self-resources, a strengthening of the Church's ecumenical relations, the growth and expansion of the Extension Seminary, and a spiritual awakening at the level of the congregations), there are also signs of crisis that reveal God's judgment and, thus, his ongoing activity of bringing into

*The Bolivian Thesis on "Evangelization in Latin America Today"*

More recently, the EMCB has circulated another document (entitled "Evangelization in Latin America Today") as a complement to the social creed. It was prepared in time for the Methodist Consultation on Evangelization held in Lima, Perú at the end of June and the beginning of July, 1974. Unfortunately it was not submitted to the gathering for consideration because "the leaders of the Consultation understood that the main objective was 'inspiration' for the task of evangelism rather than 'reflection' . . ." <sup>22</sup> This objection was not particularly apropos, however, for the document's fundamental purpose was not to make a contribution to 'reflection' but to provide a basic criterion for the ongoing evangelistic ministry of the EMCB. In other words, its basic intention was to outline a holistic evangelistic perspective that would help orient the evangelistic program of the Church.

The roots of this document are to be found in the IV General Assembly of the Church (January, 1974). At that time, a "national team" was elected to promote the work of evangelization. As contribution to the preparation of the team for its future task, Bishop Arias prepared a "thesis on evangelization." It consisted of statements and negations "sufficiently cutting and provocative" an undergirded by "biblical evidence" as to provoke serious reflection on a holistic evangelization, "biblical, evangelical and contemporary," oriented toward the liberation, humanization and conscientization of Bolivian society. <sup>23</sup> An instrument for reflection along the lines of the Manifesto, it was geared to provide a corrective on the one hand,

light "that which is good and that which is bad in a person or situation." But, he says, it is up to the church to "discern the signs of the times, the signs of crisis, and interpret them in the light of God's purpose for his Church." It is in this same context that Arias underscores the ideological crisis and the lack of an *adequate* correspondence between, on the one hand, the commitment of the church in its social creed (the Manifesto) and, on the other, its concrete praxis, and invites the leadership to face up to this situation. Cf. Mortimer Arias, "Reflexiones sobre la marcha," Report submitted to the Junta General y Comisiones Nacionales de la Iglesia Evangélica Metodista Boliviana, Cochabamba, Bolivia, January 8, 1975 (mimeographed), pp. 3, 1-2.

22. Mortimer Arias, "A Bolivian Manifesto on Evangelism in Latin America Today -- Introduction," in *A Monthly Letter About Evangelism*, No. 2 (February, 1975), p. 2.

23. *Ibid.*

to the largely "individualistic, emotional, other-worldly orientation" of the evangelistic practice of the EMCB, and on the other, to the lack of interest in evangelization shown by those in the Church dedicated to social service.<sup>24</sup> Says Arias:

For its educational, medical and rural development programmes the Methodist Church has always had well-trained, visionary and responsible technical staff; there have always been seminars, courses and evaluations and adequate budgets and personnel training. On the other hand, those who showed interest and initiative for the task of evangelization have always had to improvise and simply carry on using routine methods. We realized that this could not continue and that we needed to develop a serious and consistent doctrine, philosophy, policy and programme for evangelism.<sup>25</sup>

The result of the discussion on the initial thesis submitted by Arias to the National Evangelization Team was the new, complementary manifesto on evangelization, "Evangelization in Latin America Today." To distinguish it from the social creed, it will be referred to from here on as the "Bolivian Thesis" or simply as the "Thesis."<sup>26</sup>

As stated, the Bolivian Thesis is concerned with evangelization as a holistic enterprise, an enterprise which is oriented toward "the whole man and the whole of mankind"; grounded on the Scriptures; faithful to the gospel; incarnated in concrete situations through its proclamation in words and deeds; and conscientizing, because it leads man not only to an awareness of God and him or herself but also of his or her circumstances and historical responsibility.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, it underscores evangelization as essential to the church and as consistent with the right of every human being to hear the gospel and have the opportunity to know Jesus Christ and his liberating gospel. This means, furthermore, that the evangelistic enterprise is permanent and that it must not be confused with many activities that often pass for evangelization and are often no more than reductionisms and/or distortions of its mandate.<sup>28</sup>

The Thesis discusses further the means of evangelization, under-

24. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

26. Since I have access to the original Spanish version, I shall follow my own translation collating it with that of the *Monthly Letter*. Cf. "Evangelización hoy en América Latina," Tesis boliviana, Iglesia Evangélica Metodista en Bolivia, La Paz, 28 de junio de 1974 (mimeographed).

27. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 1-2.

28. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

scoring the role of the Christian as a martyr-witness and the community of faith as the sign of the good news. Evangelization takes place both through the proclaimed word and the actualization of the gospel in life. To be authentic, evangelization will require a courageous commitment to the cause of the gospel. "There is no evangelization without a cross."<sup>29</sup> It will also require that openness and humility which derive from a recognition of the human limitations of both the individual Christian and the Christian community. Both the Christian and the community stand under the judgment of the same word which is proclaimed to the world. They both need "the divine corrective that works in history" and they need to discern "the signs of the time."<sup>30</sup> Moreover, both need to be conscious of the fact that "in evangelization, *Christ precedes us*. . . The task of evangelization is to help men [and women] to discover the Christ hidden in them and revealed in the Gospel."<sup>31</sup>

In the fourth place, there is an analysis of the relation between "evangelization, politics and liberation."<sup>32</sup> Acknowledgment is made of the fact that evangelization may not identify itself with so-called party politics. Nevertheless, proclamation of the Word of God and the light which it sheds upon life will have, inevitably, political repercussions. The fact that evangelism insists upon and involves commitment to the world, especially to those who suffer the most, makes it definitely a prophetic enterprise, which not only announces new liberating possibilities for mankind, but denounces "all that is not in accordance with the Gospel."<sup>33</sup> In this sense, evangelization is political in nature, for it is bound to clash with the forces that oppress mankind, the collective and social forms of sin, and "set in motion the forces of liberation" in the living anticipation, by faith and hope, of the ultimate liberation of mankind from all oppressions. To participate in the task of liberating men, women and children from concrete oppression and to work on behalf of justice "is a constituent part of the proclamation of the gospel."<sup>34</sup> Evangelization is, accordingly, a profoundly humanizing endeavor.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 3f.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

34. *Ibid.*

Finally, the Bolivian Thesis addresses itself to the challenge of evangelization in Latin America. To evangelize in this continent requires not only faithfulness to the fullness of the gospel but also full awareness of the situation. The gospel in Latin America must not only be addressed to the essential human condition but also to the human situation, as manifested in the particular historical moment in which Latin America is living.<sup>35</sup> This moment is described as a situation between *captivity and liberation*,<sup>36</sup> pregnant with a climate of *rising expectations*. While some enjoy the privilege of freedom, the great majority live in social, economic and political captivity, yet looking toward a new day. In this context, the evangelistic enterprise must accentuate the power of the gospel unto salvation.

Evangelism helps us to endure suffering and also to fight against the sources of unjust suffering, and to change that which can and should be changed. Otherwise our evangelism would be a betrayal both to the liberating gospel and to the Latin American man.<sup>37</sup>

Thus the EMCB gives expression to its quest for an integral, liberating, humanizing and conscientizing, evangelization and its hope of recovering its evangelistic vocation within the framework of the wholeness of the gospel, the alienated situation of men and women everywhere and the concrete historical situation of Latin American society.<sup>38</sup> But this quest and hope are expressed in the perspective of an action-reflection dialectic.

After all is said and done, what is most urgent is to evangelize. A reflection that is not done in action is of no use.<sup>39</sup> What we need right now is an evangelistic 'praxis' -- an action-reflection dialectic. . . . Without waiting to develop elaborate and systematic definitions we must start from where we are.<sup>40</sup>

In and through all of this the EMCB has found itself confronted with dissensions within its ranks: the fact that the Thesis was

35. "There is here," according to Arias, "a deliberate dialectic between the 'human condition' (fallen nature, sin) and the 'human situation' (oppressed man, oppression)." Interview.

36. On this, see the discussion in Chapter XI on Arias' book, *Salvación es liberación*, (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1973).

37. Cf. *Monthly Letter* version, p. 8.

38. Cf. the last paragraph of the Spanish original, version of June 28, 1974.

39. *Idem*.

40. Cf. *Montly Letter* version, p. 8.

adopted by the National Evangelization Team does not mean that this document has the backing of the whole church. This was vividly illustrated by a letter received by Bishop Arias from one of the seminarians of the Church studying in Buenos Aires. Shortly after receiving a copy of the Thesis this student also received a circular letter strongly criticizing the way the Church was being run. The question he put to Bishop Arias was: "Which is the true EMCB? The one of the Thesis or the one of the circular letter?"<sup>41</sup> This also helps explain why there is in both the Thesis and the Manifesto a lack of "militant concreteness." Both fall short of opting for one socio-economic system over another (socialism over capitalism). Both avoid making a specific commitment, leaving, in the words of Míguez-Bonino, "political militancy. . . to individuals or groups but not to the [church] as such."<sup>42</sup> Míguez goes on to ask, "How long is it possible to remain on the plane of ecclesiastical declarations . . . without abandoning the Christian precisely when he [or she] confronts the most critical of all decisions, that of his [or her] concrete militancy?"<sup>43</sup> The alternative, however, is to pull so far ahead of the base that not only the ideological split will be carried to the structural and missiological level, but what is worse, the opportunity for conscientization will shrink to infinitesimal proportions.

But even if it is justified for pastoral reasons for the Thesis and the Manifesto to avoid making an option for a given system, the question remains whether these documents can be of any real effect when in fact, as the highest Church authorities themselves recognize, their contents have not filtered down to the grass roots. The challenge before the EMCB, therefore, is how effectively to communicate the message of both documents at all levels of the Church. This kind of communication is being attempted in the case of the Thesis by giving its "call to action" a programmatic thrust via intimate relation-

41. Arias, "Reflexiones," p. 3.

42. Míguez-Bonino, "Visión del cambio social," p. 199. On this issue, Míguez compares the EMCB with the Argentine Methodist Church which in a similar, though less extensive, public declaration did take a definite option for socialism over capitalism. He notes, however, that the Argentine declaration also leaves the question of specific political action to individuals and non-ecclesiastical groups. Cf. Carlos Sebanes and Carlos J. Gatinoni, "Declaración Metodista Argentina," *Segunda asamblea general de la Iglesia Evangélica Metodista Argentina, Ulaje comparte información y documentación*, No. 5 (agosto 1971).

43. Míguez-Bonino, "Visión del cambio social," p. 202.



ship with the church's Christian Formation programs, whose objective is to stimulate adequate planning and coordination at all levels of the Church's life and ministry.<sup>44</sup> There is an ongoing effort to put all of the human and material resources of the Church at the service of this integrative task, so that in everything the Church does the evangelistic dimension (with its reflection-action-reflection dialectic) will be not only present but also strengthened. It is much too early to determine whether or not all this will help bring about a greater correspondence between the professed commitment of the leadership of the Church and the actual performance of the entire community. One thing is clear, however: in both the Manifesto and the Thesis the EMCB, at least at the level of its leadership, has committed itself to pursuit of greater concreteness in its missionary endeavor.

#### OTHER CHURCHES WITH A SIMILAR CONCERN

The EMCB was not the only church that revealed a concern for concreteness in mission. There were others who tried to pursue a similar path, making their position known through the publication of like-minded statements.<sup>45</sup> Two of these statements – those of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Panamá (EMCP) and the Evangelical Church in Brazil of the Lutheran Confession (ECBLC) – shall now be analyzed as comparative documents and further evidence of the aforementioned quest.

44. Arias, "Reflexiones," p. 5.

45. In addition to the Argentine Methodist Church's "Declaración," mentioned above, cf. the following: Jacinto Ordoñez and Inez Suarez, "Message to the Panamanian People," (Panamá: Methodist Church in Panamá, 1973) trans. and distributed by James and Margaret Goff (mimeographed); "Declaração de Curitiba" (Relações entre Igreja e Estado), in *CEI Suplemento*, No. 49 (dezembro de 1970); "Declaração da Consulta Anglicana de Lima," *CEI*, No. 87 (fevereiro de 1974), 8; "Mensaje de la Iglesia Evangélica Dominicana al Pueblo Dominicano," Published in a local newspaper on Palm Sunday 1974 and reproduced at the "Consulta de concilios, encuentro de representantes de organizaciones evangélicas de cooperación latinoamericana," República Dominicana (30 de mayo al 5 de junio), (mimeographed); and "Mensaje al país, 'Declaración de la LXVI Asamblea Anual de la Convención Evangélica Bautista de Argentina,' 25-28 de abril de 1974," reproduced in *Información ecuménica* (17 de octubre de 1974), 5-6.

For a Cuban perspective, see "Declaración del Consejo de Iglesias Evangélicas de Cuba ante la reunión de consulta del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias," La Haba-

*The EMCP: "Message to the Panamanian People"*

The "Message to the Panamanian People" of the EMCP is close in style, purpose and origin to the Manifesto. As did the EMCB with the Manifesto, the EMCP chose via its Message to make itself known to the Panamanian nation as an autonomous church subsequent to its Constituent Assembly in 1973. This Message gives an account of the Protestant and Wesleyan heritage of the Church and its arrival on Panamanian soil. It gives a brief analysis of the Panamanian situation, pointing specifically to the neo-colonial status of the country *vis à vis* the United States of America. The Church "recognizes the inalienable rights of Panamá to... exercise jurisdiction over the greatest resource of its people — the so-called Canal Zone," "rejects

na, lro de octubre de 1974, reproduced in "XXVI Asamblea Anual del CIEC," 22-26 de noviembre de 1974, pp. 63-66 (mimeographed). The latter, though not a "church declaration," is, nevertheless, important because it expresses the point of view of an organization which represents the majority of Cuban Protestant churches.

Addressing itself to the overall continental reality, the document makes five demands: (1) The immediate cessation of the "repression, tortures, persecution and illegality which keeps in power the Chilean Military Junta." (2) Respect for the civil rights of all those who are living under "the dictatorial and anti-Christian regimes of Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Chile. . ." (3) The "total and complete liberation of the people of Puerto Rico who live in a situation of dependence and masked colonialism under the mantle of a free associated state, but which we know wants the total and complete liberation of the imperialistic yoke." (4) The "devolution and total recovery of the Canal Zone by the Panamanian government and people. . ." (5) The "total elimination of the blockade against Cuba and the withdrawal of North American troops from Guantánamo. . ."

Particularly interesting is the way the document relates the Christian mission with the cause of the poor and the oppressed, defining it in terms of clarifying and cleaning-up their "path." In this context, it lends its full support to the Cuban Revolutionary Government for its stance on behalf "of oppressed peoples" everywhere, and to all those "who defy the great empires in favor of working people, who have always suffered the politics of exploitation of man by man." The "Declaración" also rejects and condemns "the methods of dependence, colonialization, arbitration, sacking and exploitation used by North American imperialism in its relations with Latin American countries."

By taking this stance, the Cuban Council of Churches declares itself to be a "strategic ally" of the revolutionary forces of the Continent. It does so, however, as a body of "believers in Jesus Christ," whose life and ministry it sees as having been "totally committed to the poor, the humble and exploited of his time."

all those factors and powers, internal or external, which prevent the full development of the Panamanian nation" and acknowledges that the Methodist Church "has not always participated positively and constructively in national life."<sup>46</sup> It thus expresses the hope that henceforth the Church will exercise a more "responsible and mature consciousness" and "carry on a ministry more pertinent to the national situation and its needs."<sup>47</sup>

Yet, the Message lacks the missiological and programmatic comprehensiveness and specificity of the Manifesto. To be sure, it defines the Church's mission along the Christological model of poverty and weakness ("our only strength comes from God who became poor and weak in Jesus Christ in order to enrich life and give it meaning [and] purpose and significance to the activity of people and nations"<sup>48</sup>). The goal of mission is defined in terms of working for God's justice and peace and participating in the formation of a new man in a new society. But when it comes to specifying the meaning of these missiological criteria, the Message does not move beyond generalities and purely secular characterizations. It speaks of freedom of life as the outworking of God's justice and peace. The new man is described in terms of wholeness and freedom; he or she is said to be one who has "new opportunities of well being, education, and creative participation in national life."<sup>49</sup> But what does it mean to be free and whole? Does the gospel and the salvation it proclaims exhaust itself in these "new opportunities"? Is this the only way by which the church, as a messenger of Christ, enriches life and gives "purpose and significance to the activity of people and nations"? Above all, how is the church, and specifically the EMCP, "to participate in the creation of a new society"? These are questions that the Message does not deal with beyond, again, vague references to such concepts as demonstration, actualization and service; vague because nowhere is there an attempt made to specify what is meant by these terms nor to outline a course of action to guide the Church in the fulfillment of its mission.

46. Ordoñez and Suarez, "Message," p. 2.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

*The ECBLC: "Declaração de Curitiba"*

The *Declaração de Curitiba*, approved unanimously by the ECBLC at its Seventh General Synod, constitutes a public declaration of the Church on its position in relation to the Brazilian government. It was personally delivered to the (then) President of Brazil, General Emilio Garrastazu Medici, by three officers of the Church and made public to the Brazilian nation on November 15, 1970.<sup>50</sup>

While it is a document on church-state relations, its point of departure is the mission of the ECBLC as church of Jesus Christ. It affirms the salvation of mankind as the objective of the Christian message, a salvation that transcends all "human possibilities, including the political."<sup>51</sup> It is a message addressed to the world in the name of Jesus Christ. Its purpose is to proclaim God's message of salvation, which is addressed to man as a whole and not just to his or her "soul"! <sup>52</sup> It is thus a message that has consequences for all the spheres of life, from the physical and personal to the social and political.

This message has a "public" and an "intimate" (personal) dimension. The former is directly related to "the problems of the world" but it cannot be separated from the latter. This keeps the church from putting its public message at the disposal and thus serving the interest of any ideology or political party.<sup>53</sup>

This does not mean, however, that the church will not deal with matters related to the state. While these two entities have, in principle, separate functions and existences, the secular consequences of the Christian message plus the fact that Christians are at once followers of Christ and citizens of their countries make the complete separation of church and state impossible and yet the differentiation between them necessary. Where the two areas coincide with one another, the task of the church is to serve as the critical "conscience of the nation." The church will fulfill this function, however, "in a non-political manner and always with the intention of finding a just and objective solution" to problems.<sup>54</sup>

50. Cf. "Declaração de Curitiba," p. 1.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*

This means that the church must seek to maintain a "free and objective" dialogue with the state in order to search for sound solutions to the complex problems of society.<sup>55</sup> To be sure, there could be tensions between the church and government agencies resulting from the public ministry of the church. "In these cases, the Church will not try to question the power of the State, as if the Church was a political party, but will proclaim the lordship of Christ."<sup>56</sup>

This is what the ECBLC attempts to do in the rest of the declaration. That is, it addresses itself to three critical aspects of the national life, trying in so doing to bear testimony to Christ.

The first is the tendency to idolatrize the motherland. Referring (implicitly) to the idolatrizing slogan that the Brazilian government diffused in the early seventies as part of the celebration of national independence ("No one can stop Brazil"; "Brazil, yesterday, today, always"), the *Declaração de Curitiba* states that while the Christian should honor his or her country, he or she should not speak of it in "an idolatrous form."<sup>57</sup> Accordingly, a dialogue between church and state is suggested as a way to plan jointly for the proper celebration of national festivities.

Secondly, the *Declaração* addresses itself to the "*educação moral e cívica*" program and the tendency to substitute it for Christian education in the schools. It recognizes that the former is a "necessary part of the curriculum for the development of a citizen," but it denies that it can be a "substitute for Christian education."<sup>58</sup> Because of its "declared ideological base,"<sup>59</sup> adds the *Declaração*, this program "confuses for many citizens the pertinent areas of the State and the Church."<sup>60</sup> Its "theistic but not confessional" orientation "can lead many to think that this education is a substitute for Christian education and that the ideological base is an alternative for Christian confessional orientation."<sup>61</sup> The ECBLC

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.*

59. For a critical study of the ideological function of religion in this program, see Hugo Assmann, "La función legitimadora de la religión para la dictadura brasileña," in his *Teología*, pp. 211ff.

60. "Declaração," p. 3.

61. *Ibid.*

expresses, accordingly, its desire to see a common investigation of this matter by representatives of the church and the state.

Thirdly, the *Declaração* raises the issue of human rights. Stating that confusion exists among many Brazilian Christians as to the truth or falsehood of the alarming news of the dehumanizing actions that are taking place in Brazil, which – in spite of repeated disclaimers on the part of the government – are not denied by the national press, it categorically affirms “that no exceptional situation justifies measures that violate human rights.”<sup>62</sup> In the light of the “ethical principles involved,” concludes the *Declaração*, the Church finds it necessary to express its opposition

to all abuses that are practiced against the least of Brazilians, including those that have a different political belief, guaranteeing them absolute certainty that they shall be treated in accordance with the basic principles of the very law by which they could possibly be tried.<sup>63</sup>

It is obvious that in spite of the last affirmation, the *Declaração* falls considerably short of measuring up to the previously considered statements. Its dualistic theologico-ethical presuppositions (a “public message” and an “intimate witness,” a political and an ecclesiastical sphere, a moral and a Christian education, an ideological and a supra-ideological plane) speak for themselves. More could be said about its liberal ideological perspective, its politically naive analysis of the Brazilian situation and its apparent ignorance of the political reality of the church.

This document is important, however, because the ECBLC is the only Protestant church in Brazil that has dared publicly to assume a critical – even if only mildly critical – stance *vis à vis* the Brazilian military establishment and to openly question its fascist ideology and inhuman practices. In this, it has shown itself – in its own limited way – to be a “fellow traveler” of the Bolivian and Panamanian churches.

### CHURCHES IN REGRESSION

These churches represent, in varying degrees, a stance that has been taken by few denominations and/or local congregations throughout Latin America. In fact, a great majority reveal a somber, backward and often reactionary missiological process. A few examples will suffice.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

63. *Ibid.*

### *Presbyterian Churches*

The National Presbyterian churches of Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Mexico have, for example, either severed their relationships with their partner churches in the USA, on account of the latter's socio-theological stance, or are on the verge of doing so. Moreover, each of these churches has been internally characterized by what Rubem Alves has described as an "inquisitorial climate,"<sup>64</sup> revealed either in the excommunication or marginalization of its most vocal, socially concerned and theologically critical leaders.

### *Methodist Churches*

The same can be said in reference to the Methodist Churches of Brazil and Costa Rica. The former has not only forced out or quieted down its socially committed *avant-garde*, but also practically excommunicated its charismatic wing, forcing it to become an independent, autonomous church (the Wesleyan Methodist Church). The Methodist Church of Costa Rica scuttled a merger plan with the Methodist Church of Panamá, on account of the latter's more socially progressive outlook.<sup>65</sup> In addition, it has marginalized, albeit not

64. Rubem Alves, "Carta Aberta a os Companheiros da Antigua Igreja Presbiteriana," quoted in "Crisis Presbiteriana Vem de Longe," in *CEI*, No. 97 (dezembro de 1974), 5. For a further account of the dissident problems in both the Brazilian Presbyterian Church and the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil, including the expulsion of their respective charismatic wings, the withdrawal of the former's theological seminary at Campinas from the Brazilian Association of Protestant Theological Seminaries (ASTE) on account of ASTE's theologically "liberal" stance and of the reaction of several of its Presbyteries against the reactionary behavior of the national power structure, see Nos. 71 (October, 1972), 95 (October, 1974), 96 (November, 1974) and 98 (January, 1975) of *CEI*.

65. This is a reaction that has a unique background. Both of these churches formed from 1968-72 a provisional conference under the leadership of Bishop Federico Pagura. During his period of service, Bishop Pagura sought to lead both churches to a missiological commitment in the concrete Costa Rican and Panamanian situation. This brought him into conflict with North American missionaries who had previously served in Cuba and had been assigned to Costa Rica after the USA had severed diplomatic relations with Cuba. A tension developed between the Bishop and these missionaries. A meeting was then called to discuss issues of missionary work and relationships in which Bishop Pagura, known throughout Latin America as a poet, author and hymn writer, read his now famous "Missionary, Go Home . . . Or Stay" statement. It is at once a criticism of missionary paternalism and a challenge for missionaries to break out

without justification in some instances, a small, vocal, socially committed group of young people and candidates for the ordained ministry.

### *Protestant Churches in Chile*

The most shocking deed thus far, however, is the declaration of support for the ruling military junta in Chile that 32 prominent Protestant church leaders signed, under the leadership of the

of their "cultural molds" and "identify with the aspirations of those peoples prematurely aged by an unequal struggle which seems to have neither termination nor hope. . . ." According to the Bishop, if missionaries "are not able to love and respect as equals those whom" they come to evangelize, they should then "go home." But if they are "ready to bear the risks and pains" of the present hour that the Latin American people are experiencing, even by denying themselves; if missionaries "begin to celebrate with" Latin Americans "the happiness of sensing that the Gospel is not only proclamation and affirmation of a distant hope but of a hope and liberation which are already transforming history", if missionaries "are ready to give more of [their] time, . . . values, . . . life in the service of these peoples who are awakening, then" they should "STAY! There is much to do; hands and blood are lacking for an undertaking so immense in which Christ is the protagonist and pioneer." (Federico Pagura, "Missionary, Go Home. . . Or Stay," in Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky, C.S.P., *Mission Trends* No. 1 (New York: Paulist Press and Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 115, 116).

The tension was not resolved. In fact, it was carried to the relations between Costa Rican and Panamanian pastors. Much more conservative than their Panamanian colleagues, feeling themselves somewhat detached from their Bishop and fearing they would be marginalized after the official merger on account of their relatively conservative social views and their inferior leadership and academic status, the Costa Ricans began to meet secretly to consider the future of their church. Then, at the time of the official merger, a document was pulled out, from "underneath the carpet" as it were, bearing the signature of all the Costa Rican pastors. In this document, the Costa Rican pastors openly rejected the merger and called for an autonomous church. It was a blow both to Bishop Pagura and The Panamanian Church, primarily because of the way in which it was done. Even so, it marked a decisive step for the Costa Rican Church, which hitherto had been run by foreigners, for it meant that at last the Church was passing into the hands of nationals. It is unfortunate, however, that this step was motivated by reactionary winds that turned the Church back from the course of commitment to the integral liberation of Costa Rican society into which Bishop Pagura had tried desperately to lead it. It goes to show that a leader can only move at the pace of his or her people!



moderator of the Independent Presbyterian Church of Chile. It was publicly made known at a meeting of 2,500 Protestants with General Augusto Pinochet, President of the Junta, on December 13, 1974 and published in the Santiago daily, *El Mercurio*, on December 19.<sup>66</sup>

Although it was later revealed that there had been some government pressure applied to the signatories,<sup>67</sup> the fact that the statement was made through the agency of a pastor who is a member of the staff of the General Secretariat of the Junta, and the fact that, in spite of the apparent threat, there was at least one bishop and perhaps other church leaders<sup>68</sup> who refused to go along with the statement reveal — at the very least — a naive, uncritical attitude on the part of many Chilean Protestant leaders toward the present government, coupled with a privatistic, ahistorical theology of mission. At worst the statement and its signing represent a betrayal of the prophetic mission of the church.

In effect, the statement links the coup of September 11, 1973 with the work of God. It says that it was "a response from God to the prayers of all believers who saw Marxism as the most powerful expression of evil and darkness."<sup>69</sup> Accordingly, the signers categorically reject "the disgraceful declaration made against our country by the United Nations," when after sending a fact finding team to Chile to investigate the truthfulness of repeated reports of torture and brutality, it accused the Junta of failing to uphold minimal human rights.<sup>70</sup> At the same time, the statement backs up the existing regime as an expression of Christian and humanitarian principles. "For a year," it adds, "the present government has proved

66. "Fuller Information on Chile Protestant Statement Sought," *Ecumenical Press Service*, 42:2 (January 23, 1975), 2.

67. Cf. "Origin of Chilean Protestant Statement Disclosed," *Ibid.*, 42:7 (February 27, 1975), 6. According to this source, "Mr. Pedro Puentes, moderator of the 'Independent Presbyterian Church', [who] works in the press section of the general secretariat [of the Junta,] . . . visited church leaders with the text of the statement and indicated the government would be displeased if they did not sign."

68. "Lutheran Bishop Helmut Frenz took strong exception to the Protestant statement and disassociated himself from it." *Ibid.* Also missing from the list of signers is the name of Rev. Isaías Gutiérrez, a respected Methodist pastor who serves as Executive Secretary of the Chilean Bible Society.

69. "Fuller Information. . .," *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.*

that its rule is based on Christian and humanitarian principles,<sup>71</sup> and its objectives are anti-Marxist."<sup>72</sup>

Thus, in the name of law and order, of anti-atheistic Marxism and of religious liberty,<sup>73</sup> these Protestant leaders, representing all varieties of Protestant churches, Mainline, Evangelical and Pentecostal, close their eyes to facts which are too well known: the overthrow of a constitutionally elected government, for which many Protestant faithful, especially those of the lower working classes, voted;<sup>74</sup> the political repression that followed, not only in the form of the abrogation of all political parties, but also in that of the imprisonment, torture and, in many instances, execution of hundreds and even thousands without trial, without regard for the most basic human rights, without respect for world opinion, which openly and

71. Cf. the *Declaration of Principles of the Chilean Government*, published on March 13, 1974, in which the government expounds the type of society it is planning to build. It claims to be grounded on a "Christian conception of man and society." For a penetratingly critical analysis of this document, see Ronaldo Muñoz, SS.CC., "Reflexión cristiana sobre la Declaración de principios del gobierno de Chile," in *DEI materiales*, Serie A, No. 1 (setiembre 1974), 1-53.

72. "Fuller Information," *Ibid.*

73. According to EPS, in "Origin,"

"More than three fourths of Chile's Protestants are Pentecostals who traditionally are more inclined to emphasize religious liberty than economic or social issues. Recognizing this, General Pinochet repeatedly emphasized the importance of religious liberty in his reply to the Protestant representatives. Coupled with this has been a willingness by Pentecostals to overlook the violation of human rights if it is done to suppress 'subversion,' 'maintain order' or 'stop communism.'"

The problem, though, is not just of Pentecostals, as the list of signers clearly shows. This is an attitude which is reflective of all brands of Chilean Protestantism. Even Bishop Frenz came recently "under attack from a conservative element" in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile "because he gave leadership to an ecumenical committee which aided some 4,500 foreign refugees to leave Chile following the September 1973 military coup." Even though he won a vote of confidence from the 52 member synod of the Church, there were 21 who voted against him. ("Bishop Frenz's Leadership Affirmed by Chilean Lutherans," *Ibid.*, 41:31 (November 14, 1974), 6. See also "Chile, Church Tensions Increase," *One World*, No. 4 (March 1975), 4). Eventually, the Bishop was declared *persona non grata* by the Chilean government, a move that was welcomed by the right-wing sector of the Lutheran Church in Chile.

74. According to a study carried out by the Dutch social scientist, J. Tennekes, among several Pentecostal churches in Santiago, 77% of those interviewed voted for the Popular Coalition of Salvador Allende during the 1971 municipal

vehemently condemned such actions. In short, these church leaders were blinded to a behavior that can only be characterized as demonic.<sup>75</sup>

We are thus faced in the middle of the seventies with an even worse polarization within the churches, than that which was evidenced at the III CELA. On the one hand, we find churches that are sincerely searching for greater concreteness in their missionary obedience, and on the other, churches that are seemingly becoming even more alienated from the disenfranchised masses of Latin America.

In previous chapters it has been said that there is more to Latin American Protestant Christianity than the official ecclesiastical structures (the churches). A significant aspect of the Protestant reality consists of the various ecumenical organizations, most of which emerged in the course of the previous decade as a response to the need for greater cooperation and coordination at the continental level. At least three of these organizations — UNELAM, CELADEC and ISAL —, give evidence of the aforementioned quest for concreteness in mission. The next three chapters will be devoted to a case study of each.

elections. Cf. J. Tennekes, *La nueva vida: El movimiento pentecostal en la sociedad chilena* (Amsterdam: Published by the author, 1973), p. 53a (mimeographed). This lends support to a general opinion held by many observers of the Chilean Pentecostal Movement, namely, that there were many (perhaps over one half) Pentecostals who voted in the national elections of 1970 for Allende, even though they were not militant members of any of the parties in the Popular Coalition.

75. For a penetrating theological analysis of the Chilean coup, see, among others, "El Reino de Dios sufre violencia (Mt. 11, 12) en Chile," *Misiones extranjerías*, Segunda Epoca, No. 22-23 (julio-octubre, 1974), 569-629.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE QUEST FOR CONCRETENESS IN MISSION

#### *Section II: The Case of the Latin American Movement for Protestant Unity (UNELAM)*

#### IN SEARCH FOR GRASS-ROOTS SUPPORT

Having started as a provisional commission, UNELAM set out to establish itself on a more permanent basis at its Second General Assembly, held in Puerto Rico in June, 1970. The Assembly was preceded by the first of a series of regional conferences of churches recommended by the III CELA: it was dedicated to the Caribbean area.

#### *The first Caribbean Regional Conference*

The Conference brought out into the open the tension between the ideologico-politically conservative sectors of the churches in the Spanish Caribbean and the progressive liberal wing, with a militant-revolutionary minority supporting the criticism of the former by the latter. The issue centered around a paper presented by Florencio Saenz of Puerto Rico in which he accused "several young ministers of sowing 'ideological dissension in the church.'" <sup>1</sup> Bishop Francisco Reus, of the Episcopalean Church of Puerto Rico, who later also presented a major paper at the UNELAM Assembly, criticized Saenz's position by affirming the church's responsibility "to penetrate society in the search for justice." <sup>2</sup> The issue, according to Reus, is not that ideological dissension is being *sown* in the churches, but the fact that the churches already *contain* ideological discordance. Opinion is divided between those who put the churches at the service of the forces of injustice and oppression by continuing to advocate an ethic of

1. "UNELAM Provoca Tensão nas Igrejas do Caribe," CEI, No. 46 (agosto-setembro 1970), 6.

2. *Ibid.*

neutrality and those who advocate the churches' commitment to the liberation of the oppressed in response to the liberating thrust of the gospel. The Bishop called upon the conservative wing of the churches of the region to take a more active involvement in the issues and concerns of the masses rather than continue to support the cause of the mighty.<sup>3</sup>

The Bishop was seconded by another speaker and supported by the persistent criticism of the Conference by an underground paper, *Pichu-Pichu*, published by a group of militant young people. The fact that the paper was banned by the Protestant Council of Puerto Rico, which hosted the Conference, shows that Saenz was not alone in his position. In fact, what he said (a summary of a book which he published thereafter, dealing with what he considered to be "a communist infiltration" of the churches<sup>4</sup>) could not have been said if it were not for the fact that there were many in the Conference, including the leaders of the host council, who were not only sympathetic with but were also supporters of Saenz's position.

In this tense, polarized atmosphere, reminiscent of the heat and controversy that took place at III CELA, UNELAM sought to settle its permanent character and to widen its organizational base. Originally legitimized by seven national councils of churches, the Second Assembly adopted a new constitution that made UNELAM an organized ecumenical movement with a multi-structural continental constituency. Membership was no longer limited to councils of churches: national churches that do not belong to a national council, international denominational associations and Protestant continental organisms of cooperation could now become members.<sup>5</sup>

### *Program Planning and Development*

Besides giving UNELAM a permanent organizational structure,

3. Cf. Monseñor Francisco Reus-Froylan, "Discrepancias ideológicas de las iglesias," in ULAJE *comparte información y documentación*, No. 1 (octubre 1970), 1ff.

4. Cf. Florencio Saenz, *Entre Cristo y el Che Guevara: Historia de la subversión política en las iglesias evangélicas de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Editorial Palma, 1972).

5. Cf. "Movimiento Pro-Unidade Evangélica Latino-Americana Define seu Trabalho para Novo Período," CEI, No. 46, 6. See also "Normas constitucionales del 'Movimiento Pro Unidad Evangélica Latinoamericana'" (Montevideo: UNELAM, n.d.), (mimeographed), pp. 2, 3.

the Assembly focused its attention on several programmatic issues which had either begun to develop in the previous period (1965-70) or had been discussed and/or recommended at the III CELA: the problem of Christology in Latin America; the role of the woman in the church and in society; the need for the continuation of regional conferences; the need for improved communications; and the project of a IV CELA.<sup>6</sup> These issues became thereafter the means through which UNELAM tried to develop an even more concrete base of grass-roots support.

This became quite evident in the Role of the Woman Project.<sup>7</sup> A special effort was made to stimulate local concern for women through the employment of a female-researcher and organizer to analyze the specific situation of the woman in a given country or region and transmit the findings to the Protestant community. The first such effort was carried out in Mexico and Central America. Then a similar effort was carried out in the Andean countries, especially Bolivia. In the latter, however, a new problem of much significance for UNELAM developed.

The problem stemmed from the fact that from the beginning UNELAM had taken the form of an umbrella organization. Its national presence rested at first in the councils of churches, and after 1970, these plus the other types of members. Now, however, UNELAM was directly involved in a national program being carried out and administered independently of the member organizations in Bolivia. The question thus arose: in whose name was the person in charge of the project acting? The question had to do not just with the grass-roots base of UNELAM but especially with its specificity and programmatic viability. In other words, what is the nature and mission of UNELAM? If it is a coordinating agency, what are its programmatic limitations? If it is both a coordinating and a functionally operating body, how can it gain a grass-roots support for its direct programs without alienating its organizational constituency? The question remains unresolved and keeps emerging every time there is a clash between the organizational and the programmatic dimensions.

The quest for concreteness was strongly manifested in May of 1972 when the Board of Directors decided to expand its annual

6. Cf. Neisel, Interview, December 29-30, 1974.

7. Cf. *Ibid.*; Emilio Castro, Personal Letter, December 23, 1974.

meeting and invite a consultant for each project that was being undertaken by UNELAM.<sup>8</sup> The motive was twofold. First, to get a broader representation of the Latin American Protestant church (thus there were representatives not only from the Mainline churches and groups, but also from Evangelical and Pentecostal para-ecclesiastical groups and churches as well). Secondly, the persons invited were themselves specialists in the different fields represented in each project. The meeting turned out to be a most creative dialogue between the Board, the staff and the invited guests, which decisively affected the future programmatic course of UNELAM. Not only were existing projects expanded and strengthened, but new ones emerged as a result of the meeting.

### *Crisis of Leadership and the Process of Regionalization*

It was around this time that the concept of regionalization began to emerge. The idea was greatly accelerated when the then general secretary of UNELAM was called to serve in the World Council of Churches and what could well be characterized as a "crisis of leadership" emerged. An attempt was made around this time to effect a merger between CELADEC and UNELAM, but the former rejected the proposal. There were many reasons adduced, but the most important one was CELADEC's mistrust of what it considered to be UNELAM's basic power structure, the national councils and their representatives in the UNELAM Board of Directors.<sup>9</sup> Had the merger gone through, it might have meant a significant step forward in the consolidation of the Latin American Protestant Ecumenical Movement.

By this time, there had been two regional secretaries added to the staff. Convinced of the need for greater grass roots involvement, the Board had decided to divide the Continent in regions, putting a person in charge of coordinating the work for each region. The vacancy in the position of General Secretary was taken as an opportunity to give greater autonomy to each regional secretary and, thus, to create a collective, collegiate secretariat-general. Henceforth the UNELAM program was carried out regionally in the form of the planning of regional conferences with an eye to the building of a

8. Cf. *Ibid.*

9. Although, ironically, as an organization CELADEC derives its legitimacy from the same sources!

strong regional infrastructure that would permit a more cohesive continental structure.

It is obvious that from this moment on (early 1973) the focus came to be placed on greater local participation, without losing sight of the continental reality. The latter is guaranteed by a working agreement between the various secretaries and the coordinating functions of the Continental Coordinating Secretary, which post replaces that of General Secretary.<sup>10</sup> The emphasis of local participation is undergirded, on the one hand, by the decision to divide even the non-regionally-oriented programs among all the regional secretaries and, on the other hand, to make the Continental Coordinating Secretary himself responsible -- at least temporarily -- for the Central America and Mexico region, which had no secretary for financial reasons.

The commitment to greater local participation, however, is beset with two fundamental problems. The first is internal in scope. It has to do with two different ecclesiological views within the secretariat that are bound, in the long run, to affect the continental structure of UNELAM.<sup>11</sup>

In the opinion of one regional secretary, UNELAM must limit itself to work with churches. Of course, it can work, on a contractual basis, with other continental entities: Its sphere of action, however, must be the churches and their "legitimate representatives."<sup>12</sup> His approach is, therefore, strictly ecclesiastical: to recruit as many churches as possible to participate in the regional programs of UNELAM and thus build a continental ecclesiastical infrastructure.

Another more charismatic regional secretary agrees that UNELAM must work with the church. "But," he asks, "which church?"<sup>13</sup> For him, it should be "The whole church: the church that dies and the church that lives, the church of yesterday, today, tomorrow."<sup>14</sup> In other words, the key is to gather the church in a dynamic involvement. Such an approach relativizes the so-called

10. Cf. Junta Directiva, "Reglamento del Secretariado de UNELAM," Reunión del 26-28 de marzo, 1973, Buenos Aires, Argentina (mimeographed); Secretariado, "Informe a la Junta Ejecutiva," *Ibid.*

11. Cf. Neisel, Interview.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*



institutional church and upholds a popular, inclusive and dynamic concept of the church. The key, then, is to secure a dynamic participation of all Protestant Christians, especially the natural leaders, rather than merely those who "legitimately" represent ecclesiastical institutions.

This, of course, represents two tendencies characteristic of the former General Secretary. At the organizational level, he would try to recruit as many representatives from the ecclesiastical structures, especially the national churches, as he possibly could. At the programmatic level, he would involve as many as possible from all the sectors of the church, so as to get a rich variety of participants and a broad representation from the Protestant reality. The aforementioned ecclesiological views are, thus, an extension of the previous stage in UNELAM's history, but with this difference that whereas before they were concentrated in one person, they are now distributed between the functionaries, with at least two other secretaries caught in between.<sup>15</sup> Yet, with the new style of regional autonomy, the problem is not without its eroding potential. For it is not just a question of two different tendencies within one, albeit pluralistic, structure. It is rather that within the one structure (the secretariat) two different tendencies have developed which are bound to affect decisively the character of at least two of the four regional infrastructures. But will this not mean ultimately the repetition of the same situation that has made Mainline Protestant ecumenism a polarized structural reality, that is, opposite ecclesiological tendencies translating into a multiplicity of ecumenical, sometimes competitive, organizations? In the case of UNELAM, however, this would mean creating opposite regional structures which could lead to an internal collision and a further organizational split.

The second problem is external in nature. It has to do with the way UNELAM has handled the Central America and Mexico region. With the budgetary limitations and the process of regionalization, it was decided that the Continental Coordinating Secretary should also be in charge of this region. But here a particular difficulty arose.

For one thing, this was one of UNELAM's least penetrated regions. It had very few members from this area. Nevertheless, it had two persons in its board representing Central America and one

15. Cf. *Ibid.*

representing Mexico. All of them were particularly aware of the deep-seated feelings which existed in the area against the world-wide organized ecumenical movement, feelings which had originated and grown under the influence which foreign conservative missionary structures and leaders exercised upon the groups and churches ministering in the region. The question was, then, how best to go about creating a climate of trust in which the churches and groups would come together in projects of common concern and, thus, improve the possibility of a more effective missionary engagement in the Central American and Mexican situation.

It was out of this concern, that in 1972 the former General Secretary, with the support of the Board, asked the Latin American Biblical Seminary (SBL) in San José, Costa Rica to coordinate a regional Protestant conference. The request went to the Seminary because it had shown itself to be a very dynamic component of an Evangelical Protestant consortium (Community of Latin American Evangelical Ministries – CLAME) based in the area, which had been fulfilling an impressive role as a bridge-builder between the Evangelical and the Mainline Protestant world. The Seminary, however, after initially agreeing to undertake the task, backed away, but promised to cooperate fully with the Conference.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, a group of Central American church leaders, representing several churches and organizations, concerned over the need to find a “common expression” of their faith,<sup>17</sup> decided to form an Ad-hoc Committee to work toward a regional gathering as a first step toward a regional cooperative organism. Accordingly, it went to UNELAM to request its help in the acquisition of the necessary financial resources for the project.<sup>18</sup> This request was

16. Cf. Karl Ernst Neisel, Letter to Ruben Lores, May 17, 1973; Ruben Lores, Letter to Karl Ernst Neisel, June 7, 1973; *Idem*, Letter to Karl Ernst Neisel, July 11, 1973.

17. Róger Velásquez-Valle, Letter to Robins Strong, Deputy Director Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, WCC, September 19, 1974. Cf. “Acta No. 1 de la Sesión del Comité *Ad-hoc* del Encuentro de Líderes Evangélicos de Centro América y México,” Alajuela, Costa Rica, 15 de diciembre de 1973; “Acta No. 2 de la Sesión del Comité Coordinador Pro-Encuentro de Líderes Evangélicos de América Central,” Ciudad Guatemala, 17 de marzo de 1974.

18. Cf. Róger Velásquez-Valle, *et al.*, Letter to Wilfredo Artús, Treasurer of UNELAM, November 27, 1973; Róger Velásquez-Valle, Letter to Luis Buscafusco, President of UNELAM, and Wilfredo Artús, May 20, 1974.

motivated by the Committee's conviction that its proposed meeting fitted into the scheme of regional conferences that UNELAM had been promoting, albeit with the variant that it would require a slight geographical modification and a limited programmatic role for UNELAM, but with the advantage that it was an indigenously initiated effort that could provide, in the long run, a much greater base of support for the long range goals of UNELAM. Moreover, the Committee felt that since UNELAM was the most representative Protestant body in Latin America, it was in the best position to help secure the necessary funds.

UNELAM, however, first responded with a long silence; later with a counter proposal to organize the "official" Central America and Mexico Protestant Conference;<sup>19</sup> thirdly, with a negative letter explaining that there were no funds for such a gathering as the Committee was proposing, the only funds available were for a pre-IVth CELA regional conference;<sup>20</sup> and finally, with a direct attempt to

19. Cf. Angel Luis Jaime, Continental Coordinating Secretary of UNELAM, Circular letter to Central American leaders, July 5, 1974. In a later meeting between Jaime and members of the Coordinating Committee, the problems and tensions between the latter and UNELAM were clearly discussed. In this meeting, Velásquez-Valle and Julia Esquivel outlined the factors that had led the Committee to work toward an independent meeting, namely,

- a) Previous decisions to impose vertically a Regional Conference in Central America, on the part of UNELAM, without consulting the grass roots.
- b) Existing pressures to force the creation of this same Regional Conference as a desperate attempt to achieve results.
- c) Vicious processes of bi-personal arrangements that have not taken seriously the ability of the churches of the region to promote this project.

(Róger Velásquez-Valle, "Acta de la reunión del Rev. Angel Luis Jaime con dos de los directivos Pro-Encuentro de Líderes Evangélicas de Centroamérica," San Salvador, El Salvador, 7 de agosto de 1974). It was further stated that the Committee was not renouncing "its reiterated request to UNELAM for financial backing, of which it has not had any response for three months (May 20)."

After this meeting, Jaime went to Costa Rica and met with local leaders. Among those present were two members of the Committee. After he explained his point of view, they presented the Committee's position. According to Rafael Baltodano, General Secretary of CLAME, and a member of the Committee,

"The Rev. Jaime said that he was taking along the points made in San Salvador, but that he was certain that the members of the Board of UNELAM would not agree to finance the Encounter. . . and that he would so personally recommend."

(Rafael Baltodano, Letter to the members of the Committee, August 29, 1974).

20. Luis L. Buscufusco, Letter to Róger Velásquez-Valle, August 27, 1974.

block the channeling of ecumenical funds for this purpose.<sup>21</sup> But the Committee remained firm in its position. This is vividly illustrated in a letter of the Chairman:

It is my understanding that several pastors and leaders from the different churches in Central America have been motivated not only by the need but also by the possibility of creating an indigenous movement in our great motherland. From the beginning we have made clear that our concern responds neither to mandates nor wishes beyond our region. We have wanted to have an autochthonous movement supported by and from the grass roots, our churches. In Central America UNELAM is not really known and neither do we want to force a relation with UNELAM.

In other words, first we shall resolve with our own house the expression that typifies our Protestant Christian task. This definition will decide later on the conditions and relations with UNELAM and any other movement at the continental or world level.

If we asked for funds, we have done it following the established river-bed, and since there is no other organism more representative than UNELAM, we channeled through it our request to the ecumenical entities that may want to finance our project. But we are not going to apologize for this, nor to feel obliged to follow pre-established lineaments. I believe we are within a Christian family that acts with freedom and openness.<sup>22</sup>

The indigenous Central American meeting was held in March, 1975 with autonomously raised resources from several ecumenical agencies.<sup>23</sup> UNELAM, after threatening to go ahead with its own conference, seemed to abandon the project. The issue, however, has left UNELAM with several stains that are bound to affect its future involvement in the area for at least several years. Above all, it has brought out into the open a contradiction between UNELAM's commitment to the process of regional indigeneity and its programmatic

21. According to information gathered through several letters and interviews, Jaime wrote a letter to the CWME urging the latter not to support financially the Committee's project since UNELAM was already engaged in the preparation of a regional conference. Cf. José Elías Sánchez, Secretary-Treasurer of the Committee, Letter to Robins Strong, December 23, 1974; Emilio Castro, Letter to Gustavo Parajón, *et al.*, January 9, 1975; Róger Velásquez-Valle, Letter to Emilio Castro, February 3, 1975; *Idem*, Personal letter, February 24, 1975; Castro, Interview, February 2, 1975.

22. Róger Velásquez-Valle, Letter to José Elías Sánchez, *et al.*, June 24, 1974.

23. Cf. "Central Americans Vow to Encourage Unity," *Ecumenical Press Service*, No. 11 (10th April 1975), 3.

performance, dominated by a verticalist tendency which, if anything, is bound to intensify the already deep-seated suspicions that exist in areas like Central America. If its objective was to secure a greater grass-roots supporting base, at least in Central America it went about it in the wrong away! <sup>24</sup>

## QUALITATIVE STEPS TOWARD CONCRETENESS IN MISSION

In spite of its internal and external flaws, UNELAM was instrumental in giving a qualitative push to the quest for concreteness in mission within Latin American Protestantism. A look at several UNELAM-sponsored projects can easily verify this assertion.

### *The Role of the Missionary in Latin America*

Particularly significant were two consultations on "the role of the missionary in Latin America." The first was held in collaboration with the Latin American Department and Overseas Personnel Section of the Division of Overseas Ministries of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, in Oaxtepec, Mexico, from November 16 to 20, 1970.<sup>25</sup> It was oriented toward the particular problem that the presence of a large number of North American Protestant missionaries poses to the Latin American churches. The Spanish version of the consultations' report described the problem succinctly and

24. It must be noted, however, that elsewhere UNELAM has not had this sort of problem. For example, the First Andean Conference of Protestant Churches, held in Lima, Perú, August 18-24, 1974 revealed a tremendous sensitivity to the problems of the region. (Cf. "Informe de la Primera Conferencia Andina de Iglesias Evangélicas," Oficina Regional de UNELAM para los Países Andinos, Santiago, Chile, 1974, (mimeographed).) The same seems to be the case with the preparatory process for the first regional conference of the eastern southern cone (Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina) and a second conference being prepared for the Caribbean area. In both, there are signs of extreme care in the relationship with the churches and leaders of the area. (Cf. Karl Ernst Neisel, Letter to the members of the Preparatory Commissions for the Regional Conference in Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, March 1974; Comité Organizador, "Programa de la Conferencia regional de iglesias evangélicas del Caribe hispano a celebrarse en Colombia - junio, 1975" (mimeographed).)

25. "Report of the Consultation on the Future Role of the Missionary," *Supplement to the Latin American Newsletter* (New York: Latin American Department, Division of Overseas Ministries, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, n.d.).

vividly: *North American Missionaries in Latin America: What For?*<sup>26</sup>

The participants included representatives of 14 North American Mainline denominations that have missionary work in Latin America plus several Latin American theologians and church leaders, two from churches that have had a missionary-free history.<sup>27</sup> In addition, there were representatives from the British Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches and a guest African anthropologist.

The consultation explored such questions as the historico-cultural context of mission in Latin America, with specific reference to the sixties; the relation between the missionary enterprise and the role of mission boards; the participation of missionaries in the church's mission in Latin America; the experiences of a church that has never had any missionaries and yet has participated in the sending enterprise (the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil) and a church that has grown enormously and developed indigenously without any missionary personnel (the Methodist Pentecostal Church of Chile); and the usefulness of missionary personnel. The exploration of these issues led the participants to a series of conclusions and suggestions that were published and distributed among mission boards in North America, churches and service organizations throughout Latin America.<sup>28</sup>

The participants recognized and acknowledged that missionary work in Latin America takes place in a revolutionary environment. This means that mission boards and missionary candidates must be aware of the oppressive socio-economic situation of the peoples of Latin America, their search for liberation and the call of the church to an incarnated participation in the people's struggles and aspirations.

The Report suggested, moreover, that mission boards and missionaries bear in mind the fundamental role of the national church in the setting of missionary policy. Accordingly, missionaries must be sensitive to the fact that they are gifts from one church to another and can only be useful to the extent that they respond to the felt

26. *Misioneros norteamericanos en América Latina, ¿para qué?* (Montevideo: UNELAM, 1971).

27. Cf. Emilio Castro, "Introduction to Spanish Edition of the Consultation Report," in "Report," pp. 1, 2.

28. Cf. "Findings of the Consultation," in "Report," pp. 26ff.

needs of receiving churches. But this implies that national church bodies need to make clear to their sending partners the specific tasks for which they are requesting missionary personnel, and likewise, that mission boards must bear in mind the national church's needs in the process of planning, and in recruitment and selection of their missionary personnel. This also implies a disposition to dialogue with the national church if and when the mission board should feel challenged to collaborate with non-denominational organizations in a given country.

A third area of concern had to do with the question of a life vocation. It was suggested that while missionaries might be committed for life to their vocation, they needed, nevertheless, to be flexible in the specific fulfillment of their calling. A missionary needs to be ready to move in different social and geographical situations, as time and circumstances demand. Therefore, he or she should be a person who has not only gone through an intensive educational process before initiating his or her service and between terms; he or she must also cultivate habits of reflection and re-educate him or herself. A missionary should always be critically reflecting on his or her context and the missionary engagement of the church with which he or she is working.

Furthermore, since mission is a universal enterprise, it must have an international structure. According to the participants, there needs to be in Latin America an intensified effort to make this a reality. Thus, it was suggested that a Latin American mechanism be set up to facilitate the exchange of Latin American missionary personnel and an eventual Latin American participation in the missionary situation of the North American churches.

These were, in short, the major recommendations of the Oaxtepec Consultation. To be sure, many of them have been aired before in extra-Latin American gatherings. But the fact that they have never been carried out merited their being repeated. According to the Oaxtepec Report the recommendations made at the 1963 consultation sponsored by the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the W.C.C. in Toronto, Canada "about the preparation of missionary personnel have not been taken seriously either by the sending or the host churches in the Latin American situation."<sup>29</sup>

29. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Beyond the reaffirmation of important past statements that have not been adequately transmitted or adhered to, the Consultation made several valid, useful and imaginative suggestions for the overcoming of the problem which the overwhelming presence of North American missionary personnel poses for the Latin American church. By placing the missionary within a charismatic (a gift of love from one church to another), dialogic (the result of a fruitful dialogue between two churches) and a universal (an expression of the worldwide task of the one church) perspective, the Consultation transcended individualistic and nationalistic barriers as well as the rich/poor-church dichotomy that has often made the world missionary enterprise the private possession of the affluent churches. Likewise, by underscoring the incarnational character of the missionary endeavor and the imperative of an ongoing reflective process in mission, the Report forced those responsible for shaping and carrying out the missionary policy of the various boards and churches to analyze these policies in the light of the concrete issues and challenges facing the church and to evaluate the depth of missionary obedience, not only of the receiving churches but also of the mission boards and missionaries themselves.

A second consultation was held four years later in Maracaibo, Venezuela under the sponsorship of UNELAM's Caribbean Secretariat in collaboration with the Ecumenical Sharing of Personnel desk of the W.C.C. This time, however, participation was limited to church leaders from the Spanish Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, Northern South America (Venezuela and Colombia) and Panama. The object of study was limited to "the problem of missionarism" in this region: *i.e.*, of "the missionary image interiorized by pastors and believers." This problem has to do not only with the fact that the aforementioned region is one of the most densely populated in terms of physical presence of North American Protestant missionaries; it has also and especially to do with the "missionary mentality that is a product of an initial style of work with paternalistic and foreign roots."<sup>30</sup> According to the Report of the Consultation, such a situation has produced churches that live in isolation

30. Benjamín Santana, "Consulta sobre intercambio de personal misionero," (San Juan: Secretaría Regional del Caribe de UNELAM, 1974), (mimeographed), p. 3.



from their concrete reality... strangers in their own continent; [churches] with a theology formulated to expand upon and respond to other experiences, containing themes discussed in the USA and Europe; with structures that do not respond to their situations; and methods of communication that presuppose audiences that do not even exist.<sup>31</sup>

Thus the urgency of the problem. At stake was the very selfhood of the church and its missionary vocation in a continent that demands a greater commitment to its struggle for liberation from enslaving and oppressive forces and structures. The question was not whether missionary work was no longer valid, but rather whether the existing missionary endeavor was congruent with the Latin American church's felt need, whether it reflected a servant-spirit and whether it responded to missionary structures that function, not in service of themselves but in that of the changing Latin American situation and the commitment of the gospel to the integral liberation of men and women. When in fact the missionary enterprise is an expression of foreign economic, political and cultural domination; when it does not take into account the concerns, the felt-needs and the vision of the national church; when it follows the pattern of "free denominational competition," then, said the Consultation, it must be openly rejected.<sup>32</sup>

It was within this framework that the Consultation made its recommendations to the churches and organizations working in the region. These recommendations do not necessarily follow a coherent order, but they do reflect a missiological concern that goes beyond the problem of missionary personnel and accentuates, instead, the larger problem of mission in Middle America.

The participants became aware, during the course of the Consultation, of the need to redefine both the role of the vocational missionary (to distinguish it from the role of the traditional missionary) as well as the whole theoretical framework of mission, in such a way that this role and framework grows out of "the social, economic, political and cultural reality of Latin America."<sup>33</sup> The church can outline a clear policy for the role and task of the missionary only if it discovers its mission in the heat of concrete reality.

This also means that the missionary must be willing to confront

31. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

33. *Ibid.*

his or her ministry with Latin American reality. He or she must also be willing to empty himself or herself of the prejudices and interests of the society from which he or she comes, identifying with and incarnating himself or herself in the aspirations and frustrations "of our people."<sup>34</sup> The willingness of the missionary to work under the leadership of the national church, and the latter's commitment to a mission oriented toward the concrete needs of society ought, therefore, to be fundamental requirements of missionary service. In this context, both national and missionary leadership have the prophetic responsibility "of annunciation and denunciation in the oppressive structures of the church and the world."<sup>35</sup>

If the interiorized, distorted missionary image is to be overcome, adds the Report, new methods of Bible study and gospel communication must be found. Accordingly, it was suggested that the churches take close notice of their context, not only for the purpose of discovering the specific issues to which they must orient their mission but also with an eye to discerning the alienating missionary images that lie in the subconsciousness of their faithful. This task requires "ample ecumenical collaboration."<sup>36</sup> The Consultation invited the churches of the region "to overcome denominational rivalries by renouncing fanatic prejudices and recovering the Christian spirit of love and respect for the person who holds dissident doctrinal or ideological opinions."<sup>37</sup>

Such a perspective, of course, affects theological education fundamentally. Therefore, the seminaries and theological institutes of the region were invited to actualize the content of their teaching, "to contextualize their formative programs in the Latin American situation and to revise their methods of biblical interpretation."<sup>38</sup> They were asked, thus, to stop imitating the patterns imposed by the traditional missionary or imported from other socio-cultural situations, and to seek to develop a planned theological education with a curriculum that corresponds to the missiological challenges of the region.

The churches were, furthermore, invited to consider new forms of

34. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

38. *Ibid.*

missionary obedience. One of the new forms would be the sharing of missionary personnel between Latin American countries, denominations, theological educational institutions, student and ecumenical programs. To this end, the Consultation made a recommendation similar to that of Oaxtepec: "the creation of international funds with which to subsidize the exchange of missionaries between Latin American countries, a program in which priorities are fixed by the national and local churches."<sup>39</sup>

Finally, the Consultation addressed itself to the convenors and planners of the IV CELA. Given the importance of the missionary vocation, it recommended that the IV CELA study the contemporary challenge of the missionary calling of the church and help bring up-to-date throughout Latin America the traditional concept of the missionary vocation.<sup>40</sup>

The genius of UNELAM, as far as the Oaxtepec and Maracaibo consultations were concerned, lay in its sensitivity to the issues involved and the way in which it planned and organized the consultations and promoted their findings. To be sure, neither of these consultations was completely free of limitations. In the first, the participants themselves lamented the fact that there were not enough persons from the North American missionary structures. Most of the North American participants came from the Mainline denominations in North America; there were hardly any representatives from the Independent Foreign Missions Association (IFMA) and the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA).<sup>41</sup> In the second, the recommendation made in Oaxtepec in reference to the creation of an international mechanism that would facilitate the participation of the Latin American churches in the mutual sharing of their human (missionary) gifts was repeated; this fact made it quite obvious that the recommendation had not been taken very seriously in the intervening four years.

Even so, there was considerable progress made during this time between the consultations. The 1970 gathering had been held in response to a request made by Latin American leaders at a special conference held in Bogotá, Colombia in 1966. It was proposed that "senior missionary board executives and responsible Latin American

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 8. Cf. "Findings," p. 27.

40. "Consulta," p. 9.

41. Cf. "Findings," p. 27.

churchmen" come together for a discussion "on the roles of the missionary and the national pastors in the contemporary Latin American situation . . ." <sup>42</sup> At Oaxtepec, however, the problem was explored much more deeply. Oaxtepec went beyond a mere consideration of "the role of the missionary and the national pastor"; it explored the very notion of the missionary vocation of the church in the revolutionary situation of Latin America. <sup>43</sup> Missionary work was thus analyzed within the framework of the total task of the church. <sup>44</sup> This permitted the underscoring of other issues not likely to be considered in a foreign missionary-national pastor discussion, such as, for example, the universality of the missionary enterprise *vis à vis* the tendency of restricting it to churches from affluent lands; the incarnational and sacrificial imperative of missionary work as opposed to the ahistorical, non-committal endeavors of many missionaries in Latin America; and the need to accelerate the internationalization of mission. The fact that the papers and conclusions of Oaxtepec were widely distributed in Spanish and English among responsible church leaders and mission boards made the Consultation an important conscientizing factor.

Perhaps it was at the level of mental awareness that the most significant progress can be observed between Oaxtepec and Maracaibo. For the latter represented a regional concern (having to do with a deformed missionary praxis), which demanded an awareness that is usually limited to missiological sophisticated circles (mission executives and professional missiologists). Nor did this

42. William L. Wipfler, "Introduction to English Edition of Consultation Report," *Ibid.*, p. 2.

43. See, for example, Mauricio López' paper, "The Secular Context of Mission: Latin America in the Decade of the Sixties" and the Report of Working Group "A" in "Findings," both in *Ibid.*, pp. 4ff. and 26ff.

44. Other presentations included, Eugene Stokewell, "Reflections on the Missionary Enterprise and the Role of Mission Boards," pp. 9ff.; João P. da Silva, "The Participation of Missionaries in the Mission of the Church in Latin America," pp. 14ff.; Daily Resende França, "The Missionary Experience of a Church Without Missionaries — Brazil," pp. 17ff; Alfredo Ramírez R., "A Church Without Missionary Personnel — Chilean Experience," p. 20; and Edmundo Desueza, "Missionary Personnel: For What," pp. 21ff., *Ibid.* In addition, there were two other working groups, one on "Missionary Policy and Inter-church Relationships" and another on "Requests for Selection and Orientation of Missionaries." "Findings," *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 28.

concern burn itself out in polemical debate at the Consultation. It was rather placed in a larger, yet concrete missiological perspective, as evidenced by the mature, forward looking recommendations that were made. That the Consultation failed to present its case coherently, leaving aside such fundamental questions as the joint participation of Catholics and Protestants in mission and the question of inter-continental missionary participation, can be viewed as an expression of the provisional character of the reflection that took place there. But it is in this so-called incoherence that the genius of the Maracaibo meeting and that of the contribution of UNELAM lies: opportunity was provided for a group of concerned church leaders engaged in mission to reflect critically, collectively and freely on the issues that were emerging out of their engagement; and they made full use of the opportunity, even at the risk of expressing themselves incoherently.

### *The Church's Mission to the Indians*

Another particularly significant UNELAM project is the program that it is helping to coordinate on behalf of the Indians in Latin America. The publication of the "Declaration of Barbados for the Liberation of the Indians," produced by a group of anthropologists from Latin America, meeting in Barbados at the beginning of 1971,<sup>45</sup> forced the churches of Latin America to consider seriously the Declaration's call for a suspension of all missionary work. A meeting was convened in Asunción, Paraguay<sup>46</sup> by the Program to Combat Racism (PCR) of the WCC and organized by UNELAM. This gathering became the starting point of a joint effort between PCR and UNELAM to deal with the oppression of Latin American Indians.<sup>47</sup>

The Asunción meeting, held on 7-10 March 1972, gathered repre-

45. Cf. "Declaration of Barbados for the Liberation of the Indians," *The Situation of the Indian in South America* (Berne and Geneva: Ethnological Institute and Program to Combat Racism, World Council of Churches, 1972), pp. 376ff. See also IRM, LXII:247 (1973), 268-274.

46. Cf. Karl Ernst Neisel, "The Church and Its Mission Among the Indians of Latin America" and "Asunción Statement," in R. Pierce Beaver, ed., *The Gospel and Frontier Peoples: A Report of A Consultation*, December 1972 (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1973), pp. 376ff. See also IRM, LXII:247 (1973), 275-277.

47. For an account of the PCR's involvement in the Indian situation up to

sentatives from Protestant and Roman Catholic Missions working among Latin American Indians. After analyzing the Declaration and its supporting documents, the participants produced a statement. This statement affirmed missionary work as "the very *raison d'être* of the Church,"<sup>48</sup> but recognized that "there have been times when our Churches have been inseparable from and instrumental in the enforcement of ideologies and practices of tyranny. . . ."<sup>49</sup> Moreover, it acknowledged "that historically speaking, our Churches have not succeeded in impregnating Latin American societies with a liberating Christian love, free from discrimination of race, creed or culture."<sup>50</sup>

It denied, however, that the admission of these ills warrants the ending of all missionary activity. In her mission to the Indians, adds the Statement, the church has a threefold task:

- a) To renounce all ideologies or practices which connive at any form of oppression, particularly when they claim to be based on religious motives and to be justified in the name of the Lord.
- b) To denounce, in a spirit of truth, and not merely with words but with actions, every case of exploitation occurring in our national societies and in our Churches themselves, even if this involves denunciation of specific persons and institutions.
- c) To proclaim with faith in the Holy Spirit Christ's Gospel, essential for the full liberation of the Indian, and thereby to liberate the Church itself, once again, to bear authentic witness.<sup>51</sup>

In accordance with point b), the Asunción Statement went on to enumerate several ways in which racial discrimination in Latin America is concealed. Then it called upon the various churches to take time frankly and critically to consider the situation of the Indians, stimulating and supporting the formation of specifically Indian organizations and using their moral force "to spread the concept that the Indian has rights which are inalienable."<sup>52</sup>

March 1975, see José Chipenda, "Indian Injustice," *One World*, No. 4 (March 1975), 19. No mention is made of UNELAM, but cf. Depto. de Publicaciones de UNELAM, *Preguntas y respuestas acerca de UNELAM* (Buenos Aires: UNELAM, n.d.), p. 26.

48. Statement, *The Gospel*, p. 377.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 378.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 378, 379.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 380.

Ecumenical organizations were called upon to "gather and disseminate information. . . in particular where interracial friction and indigenous religious concepts are concerned. . ."53

Out of the Asunción meeting emerged a joint project between UNELAM and PCR geared toward the execution of the general course of action set forth by the Statement. The project, currently underway, calls for the formation of ecumenical teams (Catholic-Protestant) to investigate concrete situations of oppression and discrimination, expose these situations publicly and openly and promote the self-organization of Indian communities to defend themselves against their continued oppression and exploitation.<sup>54</sup> It is too early to evaluate the full impact of such an effort, but not to underscore its potential as a concrete expression of a committed missionary praxis and a specific evidence of the good faith of those who were responsible for bringing about the meeting that produced the Asunción Statement.

### *Who is Christ in Latin America Today?*

One of the most impressive and ambitious projects heretofore sponsored by UNELAM is its Christological study.<sup>55</sup> There have been at least two consultations held to deal with the question of "Who is Christ in Latin America today?" In addition, UNELAM has cooperated with and stimulated a study undertaken by the Ecumenical Studies Center of Mexico City on "Who is Christ in Mexico Today?"

The latter<sup>56</sup> is an interdisciplinary project that attempts to make a semantic, ideological and theological analysis of the different Christologies in contemporary Mexico. The results are in the process of publication. Hopefully, there will be three volumes, prepared by two different teams with three different readings of the subject

53. *Ibid.*

54. Cf. *Preguntas*, p. 26.

55. For the overall plan of the project, see "'¿Quién es Jesucristo hoy en América Latina?' Despacho de la Comisión de Cristología, Reunión del Movimiento Pro-Unidad Evangélica Latinoamericana (UNELAM), Lima, Perú, Abril, 1972," *Boletín de ALET*, V:1,2 (mayo-septiembre 1973), 17ff. See also *Estudios Ecuménicos*, 16:72, p. 42.

56. Cf. Francisco van der Hoff, "¿Quién es Jesucristo en el México de hoy? Un proyecto interdisciplinario según un análisis semántico, ideológico y teológico de las cristologías actuales" (México: Centro de Estudios Ecuménicos, 1974), (Photocopy).

matter. Proceeding from the data collected, a sociological-anthropological team identified three different types of Christ. Each of these Christs has different functions and attributes, which depend upon the different social and psychological structures of the faithful in particular, and of society in general. Moreover, each leads to or arises out of different world views and life motives. An ideological reading of the data led to a perception of "the system of the latent meanings of religious fact" and the identification of "the structures that give coherence to the message within the religious beliefs and practices," which ultimately organize "in a system the interpretative frame of the religious fact, as a lived and formulated text. . . according to the purpose of the social phenomena."<sup>57</sup>

On the basis of the semantic and ideological readings of the Christologies present in the religious practices and beliefs among Christians in the geographical areas studied, a second team, consisting of theologians, has begun a theological analysis of the data in dialogue with the Christ of the Gospels. This team is searching not only for an understanding of the compatibility or incompatibility of the two sets of Christs -- that of the biblical material and that of the various Christs in Mexico -- but especially for "internal theological patterns with which to make theological 'judgments' about the credibility of the different images of the contemporary Christ."<sup>58</sup>

Thus far, the Mexico study has been the most serious undertaking to have emerged out of the Christological project launched by UNELAM as far back as 1968. The publication of its findings will be greatly significant, not only to those interested in the place of religion in contemporary Mexican society, but also to those interested in Latin American missiology in general.

Of the two consultations held, one was restricted to Brazil. It was held in November, 1973. Its major documents were published in book form shortly thereafter. Edited and published by ASTE (Associação de Seminários Teológicos Evangélicos), the book makes no effort to coordinate the different thoughts and perspectives that were presented in the Consultation. In this respect, it is a collection of papers whose importance can only be appreciated if one bears in mind the fact that they represent, in the words of J. C. Maraschin, "a living moment of our intellectual activity, with its discrepancies and

57. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 22.



contradictions, its highs and lows, its certainties and doubts."<sup>59</sup> Moreover, these documents, insofar as they constitute original reflections on a concrete issue of fundamental importance, can facilitate "the opening of new possibilities of confessing the faith in the midst of so many contemporary doubts."<sup>60</sup> In short, they show, albeit in a partial, general and somewhat awkward way, the extent to which the different sectors of Brazilian life are permeated with different, sometimes conflicting images of Christ.<sup>61</sup>

These documents were brought to the Continental Consultation on Christology, held in Lima, Perú in January, 1974 under the leadership of José Míguez-Bonino, as a Brazilian contribution. Other papers especially prepared for the occasion, as well as a report on the Mexico study, were also considered.

In a recent article, Míguez-Bonino analyzes the issues raised in the Lima meeting.<sup>62</sup> Far from being an exhaustive account of the Consultation, this article does give a clear enough picture to permit a preliminary overview of the project.

59. J. C. Maraschin, "Apresentação," *Quem e Jesus Cristo no Brasil?* (São Paulo: ASTE, 1974), p. 9.

60. *Ibid.*

61. Cf. L. Boff, "As Imagens de Cristo Presentes no Cristianismo Liberal no Brasil," pp. 11ff.; João Dias Araujo, "Imagens de Jesus Cristo na Cultura do Povo Brasileiro," pp. 37ff.; Hubert Lepargneur, "Imagens de Cristo no Catolicismo Popular Brasileiro," pp. 55ff.; J. C. Maraschin, "Jesus Cristo na Música Popular Brasileira," pp. 95ff.; Klaus van der Grijp, "Imagens de Jesus Cristo no Protestantismo Conservador," pp. 111ff.; Myriam Ribeiro S. Tavares, "A Representação do Cristo na Arte Colonial Brasileira," pp. 127ff.; Beatriz Muniz de Souza, "Imagens de Jesus Cristo no Pentecostalismo," pp. 143ff.; and Walter Willik, "A Imagem de Jesus Cristo nos Cultos Afro-Brasileiros," pp. 149ff. See also: L. Boff, *Jesus Cristo Libertador* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1972); J. C. Maraschin, "A Imagem de Cristo nas Camadas Populares," *Revista de Cultura Vozes*, 68:LXVIII (Setembro, 1974), 33-39; Beatriz Muniz de Souza, *A Experiência da Salvação: Pentecostais em São Paulo* (São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1969).

62. José Míguez-Bonino, "Presentación: ¿Quién es Jesucristo hoy en América Latina?," *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, XIII (Segunda Epoca): 43-44 (1ra y 2da Entregas, 1975), 5. This is the first of a two-part series on Christology in Latin America and contains some of the materials of the Lima consultation. It includes the following articles: Saul Trinidad, "Cristología-conquista-colonización," pp. 12-28; Pedro Negre Rigol, "Cristología popular: Alienación o ironía," pp. 29-34; J. Pablo Richard G., "Cristología-racionalidad política," pp. 35-41; Hugo Assmann, "La actuación histórica del poder de Cristo: Notas sobre el discernimiento de las contradicciones cristológicas," pp. 43-54; and a Spanish translation

From the moment the question, "Who is Christ in Latin America Today?" was first posed, says Míguez, it was evident that it lent itself to several possible interpretations. UNELAM opted for a descriptive-analytical approach and thus entitled the study-project, "Images of Christ Jesus in Latin America." The Lima consultation was designed as a "preliminary inventory."

Most of the material brought to the Consultation tended to identify the kind of Christologies present in Latin America via a "descriptive" or an "interpretative" methodology. In the first approach, the underlying question was that of Christological images, namely, how was Christ seen, perceived or described. In the second, the issue was not how they appeared, but how they operated. The initial conclusion of these studies, says Míguez, was fairly homogeneous. Three sets of images were brought into the limelight: the suffering and passive Christ of the masses, the all powerful and conquering Christ of the ruling elites, and the "intimate" Christ of modern subjective and private religiosity.

What relationship, if any, is there between these images and that of the biblical images of Christ? Is there a normative Christ who can help us to identify a true against a false image of Christ? Some at the Consultation felt that it was impossible to reproduce such a normative picture. They argued that the biblical record transmits not only several different types of Christologies, but what is worse, Christologies which were themselves conditioned by their respective contexts, a process which has continued uninterrupted to the present. In consequence, they argued, the Christological question stands in direct correspondence with the social situation of the ecclesial community of which it is part. Does this mean then that all there is to Christ is but a projection of a given historical situation and its "subsequent ideological reflexes?"<sup>63</sup> None of the participants who questioned the value of returning to "the sources" in order to discover the true view of Christ took this position.

The issue which they raised, however, could not but call attention to the hermeneutical question. "What hermeneutic, what theory of

of Jaci C. Maraschin's contribution to *Quem e Jesus Cristo no Brasil?* These articles plus the ones to appear in numbers 45-56 of the same journal will also be published, along with other relevant material, in a forthcoming volume by Editorial Tierra Nueva.

63. Míguez-Bonino, "¿Quién es Jesucristo?" p. 6.

interpretation allows a reading of the biblical text which is at once realistic and dynamic?" asks Míguez.<sup>64</sup> Here is where the contribution of one of the participants was particularly valuable, especially in his insistence that "the Bible itself presents, not naked historical facts, but re-readings, starting from a given situation, of these events."<sup>65</sup> There is in the Bible a "reserve of meaning," "a virtuality which the posterior situation makes possible to discover and to activate."<sup>66</sup> In consequence, the only hermeneutic which has access to this "reserve" is one which respects both "the historicity of the original text" and the "'locus' of the reader."<sup>67</sup>

Whether such a perspective would be an acceptable alternative to those who are sceptical about the possibilities of the biblical sources for a historical understanding of Christ in contemporary Latin America is doubtful. It is also questionable whether such a hermeneutic, with a vaguely defined "reserve of meaning," would be useful and acceptable to those who insist that the Bible has not only a human character, and is therefore socially and culturally bound, but also a "God-breath" character, and cannot be dealt with, accordingly, on purely historical (exegetico-critical), sociological, anthropological, political or psychological grounds.<sup>68</sup> Yet the proposed hermeneutic leaves the door open to the latter concern when it recognizes that ultimately the search for (and the belief in the possibility of discovering it) this "reserve of meaning" stems from the depth of the Christian faith.

For if we believe as Christians in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the historical and dynamic presence of Christ, [then] the present historical condition is not a 'profane' fact arbitrarily introduced into the interpretation, but rather an occasion and a call which comes from the very God who is himself present in the event to which the text witnesses.<sup>69</sup>

These were the basic issues that arose at the Consultation, according to our interpreter. Since then the project has continued along the line of "the images of Christ," of which the Mexico study

64. *Ibid.*

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Ibid.*

68. For a scholarly treatment of the "God-breath" character of Scripture, see G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: Holy Scripture*, trans. and edited by Jack B. Rogers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 139ff.

69. Míguez-Bonino, "¿Quién es Jesucristo?" p. 8.

is the best example. New avenues of research have, however, opened up along what Míguez has called "theologico-confessing" and "dogmatico-normative" lines. As to the first, it has become clear that Christology in Latin America must wrestle with the question: How does the power of Jesus Christ work in concrete history? Or, in other words, "How to understand . . . the power of Christ without de-historizing it, on the one hand, . . . and . . . [reducing] it to a mere form of designating . . . the historical process, on the other?"<sup>70</sup> It has also become clear, that a correct Latin American Christology is not possible without a reconsideration of the language of traditional classical Christology, so that it may not only reflect the thought categories of Latin American culture, but that it may also speak meaningfully to the concrete Continental reality.

The UNELAM project on "Who is Christ in Latin America Today?" illustrates both the programmatic strength and major weakness of this organization. Even though UNELAM has tried to build a wider and more solid constituency, it has avoided direct involvement on a long range basis in ecclesiastical programs. Instead, it has tried to view itself as a coordinating, catalytic service agency, called to stimulate the different sectors of the Protestant church to discover new forms of missionary obedience throughout Latin America. This is why in all the projects discussed above, and especially in the one on Christology, UNELAM has limited itself to providing the challenge, some means, and an occasional opportunity, for a continental-wide reflection experience. This has been UNELAM's major programmatic contribution.

But this approach also reflects its greatest weakness: the lack of a clear, well grounded strategy and an inadequate programatic coordination. Thus, in spite of the length of the Christology project, in spite of the two consultations that have been held, and in spite of all the promotion that has been given to this crucially important project, all that has been produced so far has been accomplished at the initiative of other agencies!<sup>71</sup>

70. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

71. For example, the Mexico study is the direct product of the Mexican Center of Ecumenical Studies, the documents of the Brazil Consultation were published by ASTE and the materials from the Lima Consultation have just begun to appear under the apparent sponsorship of Tierra Nueva, which has been heretofore associated with ISAL.

### MISSIOLOGICAL CRISIS

At the bottom of such programmatic inefficiency lies a missiological crisis, the fruit in many ways of the crisis of leadership mentioned above. Ever since the end of 1972, the process of critical reflection that had been taking place more or less since 1965, but especially between 1970-72, began to slow down. This is made clear when one compares two introductory brochures to UNELAM published respectively before and after 1972.

In the earlier of the two, UNELAM claims to be a sign of "the unity that God wants," which is "a unity in mission."<sup>72</sup> It goes on to affirm that its "supreme loyalty must be to the missionary God. [UNELAM] will be a symbol of unity if it points to concrete forms of greater faithfulness."<sup>73</sup> This loyalty requires a commitment of the member bodies to one another in the Lord, and especially the inter-communication between the officers of UNELAM themselves and between them and the members in a joint project of "meditation [reflection] on the Latin American situation and God's plan for the continent and the mission of the churches in that plan. . ."<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, the fundamental role of UNELAM is defined in terms of being

an instrument of the churches for the speedy renewal of their understanding and fulfillment of their mission. It will have to live in a constant dialectic that buds out of the encounter of the Word of God with the continental situation and ecclesiastical reality.<sup>75</sup>

In order to accomplish this goal, several guidelines must be rigidly observed. These are summarized in the following statement:

Constant communication with the bases, exercise of spiritual discernment with regard to the themes that are important to God in the continent, a dynamic relation with all the sectors of Christianity.<sup>76</sup>

There is throughout this document a clear reflection on missionary strategy. The goal of UNELAM, its mission, is clearly delineated. A general course of action is outlined. All of this is undergirded by a commitment to an ongoing process of critical reflection in praxis.

72. "El rol de UNELAM" (Montevideo: UNELAM, n.d.), pp. 7, 8.

73. *Ibid.*

74. *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

In the later introductory brochure one observes a radical difference in approach and position. Whereas in the former, reflection on the mission of UNELAM was a fundamental aspect of the ongoing life of the organization, in the latter it is reduced to one of 32 projects! <sup>77</sup> When one closely analyzes the content of this project, a striking similarity with the previous document becomes immediately evident. An even closer look at this document, however, reveals that while the conceptual definition of the role of UNELAM has been retained, the strategic guidelines have been left out! Thus we have the theoretical design of a project for which there is no clear notion of how it is to be carried out. One of the greatest challenges before UNELAM is to get out of the apparent "activist" rut into which it has fallen, by regaining, and rigidly adhering to, its old strategic guidelines.

Though UNELAM has tried to get a wider, yet concrete operational base, and though it has taken several qualitative steps in its programmatic performance, it has increasingly taken on the appearance of an organization with a split personality. This disorder, evident in its ecclesiological and staff incohesiveness and lack of a clear, well grounded strategy, has made it impossible for UNELAM to provide the necessary leadership even to implement the concerns expressed at the III CELA. It seems, therefore, that unless it can effect a thorough overhaul of itself, UNELAM will not be able to justify its existence as the ecumenical umbrella it has wished to be. Indeed, this is one matter that must be brought out into the open in the IV CELA if the latter is really to address itself to the issues and challenges confronting Latin American Protestantism in the mid-seventies.

77. *Preguntas*, pp. 29ff.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE QUEST FOR CONCRETENESS IN MISSION

#### *Section III: The Case of the Latin American Protestant Commission of Christian Education (CELADEC)*

Unlike UNELAM, CELADEC has had from its inception in 1962 a clearly defined task. It was founded in response to the need for a continental body "to promote the work of Christian education" and "coordinate all of the efforts" in this area that were currently in existence among the Protestant churches spread across Latin America.<sup>1</sup>

But as time went on, CELADEC became increasingly aware of the need for greater concreteness as far as the educational ministry of the church was concerned. This led to a redefinition of its traditional role, its understanding of the educational task of the church and, consequently, of the church's mission in the world.

The key to this redefinition can be found in the assumption on the part of CELADEC of a critical stance *vis à vis* its own constituency: the churches, federations and affiliated councils that make up its membership. CELADEC began to question the traditional notion, prevalent among its member entities, of a church that exists "for the sake of itself, of its own self-affirmation. . ."<sup>2</sup> It proposed a new concept: a church which "functions for the sake of the world in which it finds itself placed."<sup>3</sup> This, of course, has brought about not only a questioning of the traditional ecclesiastical structures that make up Latin American Protestantism, but, especially, of traditional

1. "The History and Purpose of CELADEC," Regional Report Latin America, Consultation of WCC Work in Education, Cartigny, Switzerland, October 27 November 3, 1974 (mimeographed), p. 1.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

Christian education. But CELADEC didn't stop at questioning; it went on to propose a different approach to Christian education.

## EDUCATION INSIDE OUT

### *The Mission of Christian Education*

If the church is called to exist in and for the world, then, says CELADEC, its educational ministry must also be at the service of the world. This has three practical implications.

First, it means that the fundamental reference of Christian education must be the world, concretely and specifically, the Latin American global reality. CELADEC makes this very explicit.

We start from the fundamental premise that it isn't possible to aim education in a realistic direction if we don't have a live knowledge of the deep changes and the growing expectations that are generating in Latin American populations.<sup>4</sup>

From this perspective, it follows, secondly, that the educational task needs to be conceived in terms of concrete reality. It must emerge out of and deal with the issues and concerns of the Latin American majorities. It must be defined in terms of "the full development of our nations," that is, in terms of "the effective possibility of recuperating our economic resources for the social, political and cultural evolution of the majority."<sup>5</sup>

To fulfill this task, the educational ministry of the church will need, thirdly, the support of a theology committed to the struggle for the liberation of Latin America and to the challenge which this struggle implies for the churches. Such a theology will have as its fundamental task the search for the profound meaning of the historical process of liberation and the opening of dialogue, through a common praxis, "with all those who are open to this search."<sup>6</sup>

### *The Mission of CELADEC*

How do these educational perspectives affect the mission of CELADEC? In what ways have they affected its traditional role?

The awareness of the fundamental importance of the Latin

4. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 4.



American situation for education in general and Christian education in particular has led CELADEC to become engaged in a process of educational research outside the boundaries of the institutional church. In this sense, it has defined its mission as that of searching for "criteria" to interpret "the Latin American reality," and especially, "the educational phenomenon, but always starting from concrete experiences and . . . praxis, trying never to stray far away from the real problems."<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, the placement of the educational task within the concrete situation of Latin America has decisively affected the programmatic course of CELADEC. One phase of its program has been oriented to (1) the detection of new types of educational experiences, (2) the critical analysis of these experiences, "relating them to traditional educational actions," (3) the underscoring of criteria for determining what ought to be a liberating education as well as the opening of perspectives for concrete liberating educational actions and (4) the support of grass-root popular educational projects throughout the Continent.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the efforts to develop a "committed theology" as a supporting basis for the educational task of the church has led to an open acknowledgment of the necessity of taking a long, hard look at the institutional church. This has at least two implications for the relationship of CELADEC with the church. On the one hand, it implies that CELADEC must assume a critical-prophetic role within the institutional church, seriously questioning traditional Christian education, critically evaluating the educational institutions operated by the churches and taking serious notice of the social weight of the institutional church and the need both to unmask its alliance with the oppressive sectors of society and effectively use its strength on behalf of the cause of liberation. On the other hand, this need for taking a careful look at the church implies that CELADEC must play the role of an *ecclesiola* within the *ecclesia*, joining ranks with those Christian groups in Latin America that are a sign, through their praxis, of the new church which must emerge, joining with them in the attempt to discover the marks or true face of this new church in the common struggle for the liberation of the oppressed and in the

7. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

reflection, annunciation and celebration of the faith that takes place in that engagement.

In this context, CELADEC has discovered the fundamental importance of traditional popular religiosity as a means through which the Latin American masses can become conscious of their situation of oppression. Accordingly, it has begun to place a lot of emphasis on the importance of reflecting theologically with the masses in their everyday life, "taking advantage of and starting from the manifestation of popular religiosity (processions, baptisms, funerals, etc.)."<sup>9</sup>

CELADEC has also discovered that Christian education can become "inside out" to the extent that it is "outside in." It has become aware of two moments in the educational ministry of the church. The first leads to "the interior of the church." Its task is to clarify what is concretely the church; to point out its shortcomings and its alienation from society. According to one of CELADEC's leading strategists and theological voices, this will have to lead, in the case of the Protestant church, to recognition of its alienation from the Latin American majorities. This represents

... the first step on the way to overcoming what is alienating. It is in our own reality that we must live the *incarnation of Christ*. Thus ... we will regain the meaning of that which is human, because by living the incarnation in our history we discover our humanity. . .<sup>10</sup>

Out of the recapture of the human, emerges the second moment, namely, that of the church's discovery of the true face of the world of which it is part and for the service of which it exists. Says Ortega:

... this regaining of the human, this reactualization of the incarnation ... in our reality, will lead us to discover the true face of the neighbor in this America in which we must be Christians.<sup>11</sup>

### *Toward a New Strategy*

Within this missiological educational framework CELADEC has developed a popular-level course for the churches of the Continent;

9. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

10. Hugo Ortega, "Educación para liberación y comunidad," Seminario sobre educación para liberación y comunidad, "Documento de la Quinta Asamblea General de CELADEC," Los Pinares, Bogotá, Columbia, Julio 29 a Agosto 2, 1974 (mimeographed), p. 57a.

11. *Ibid.*

has produced the syllabus for a medium-level course for interested congregations; has sponsored consultations on all levels of education ranging from the theological to the popular; has published and promoted books and pamphlets that express the above concerns; and has embarked in a series of grass-roots educational experiments, whose impact can be clearly appreciated from the recommendations of the Strategy Committee and their approval by the General Assembly at its quadrennial meeting in Bogotá, Colombia in July 1974. This strategy encompasses the following general working criteria for the 1975-78 quadrennium:

1. That all of CELADEC's programs, work and studies be set up in such a way that they make an effective contribution to the liberation of the oppressed sectors of Latin America.
2. This implies that on all fronts the concrete and total commitment demanded by the historical moment in which Latin America is living be assumed.
3. It is our conviction that our Christian faith will only have meaning within the socio-historical reality that is lived and suffered by each nation of our continent.
4. CELADEC should attempt to fulfill its pastoral and prophetic action in the only history in which the possibility of recognizing God lies [namely, human history].
5. CELADEC will fulfill a prophetic function within the educational and ecclesiastical institutions so that they will not contribute to the perpetuation of the present state of oppression, but rather contribute, in the measure of their possibilities, to the process of human liberation.
6. In the accomplishment of its work, CELADEC ought to seek out every possible space allowing for liberating action, given the present reactionary situations in Latin America, and create as much space as possible for viable action.
7. It will be the duty of the personnel of CELADEC to commit themselves to making the formulated and approved strategy a reality. Consequently it will be the duty of all non-Latin American fraternal workers to work for the realization of liberation and commit themselves to the Latin American historical process.<sup>12</sup>

How has CELADEC proposed to follow through such a comprehensive educational task? Basically by seeking "possible educational spaces"<sup>13</sup> in the following areas:

12. "Informe del Comité de Estrategia," *Ibid.*, p. 42.

13. By "possible educational spaces" is meant "opportunities whereby . . .

1. In the first place, the sectors of the marginated proletariat, the active proletariat, the peasants, the indigenous population and the medium level service sectors;
2. state and private education. . .;
3. extra mural school programs at all levels of teaching. . .;
4. the training and conscientization of teachers in all possible centers of technical and teacher training, such as seminaries, colleges, etc.;
5. the production of material for social and audiovisual communication;
6. the churches in their programs of reflection and study, work-camps, Sunday or biblical schools, workshops and all other activities oriented towards a liberating education.<sup>14</sup>

To fill these possible spaces, CELADEC has designed a number of interrelated educational programs. Some of them are being carried over from previous years and inserted into the revised strategy. Others have barely gotten off the ground. Especially significant, for the purpose of this study, are the "Experimental Program in Theology" and the project to edit and publish a Latin American Cathecism, both of which have been planned for the present quadrennium. The objective of the latter is "to offer to the churches a common and actualized theological base that can serve as reflection aid for leaders, educators, pastors and the churches in general in their attempt to arrive at a deeper and more thorough interpretation of the church's mission in the world."<sup>15</sup> The former has been designed as an attempt to influence the process of theological reflection in Latin America in general and theological education in particular.

### IMMERSION EXPERIENCES

At the bottom of CELADEC's renewed vision of its mission, lie a series of "immersion experiences." These experiences were inspired by the series of "encuentros" (encounters) that was held throughout Latin America prior to the Lima Assembly of the World Council of Christian Education in July, 1971. These *encuentros* revolved around the visits that the delegates made in dispersed groups

concrete programs and projects which tend towards a conscientizing and liberating action can be developed." (CELADEC, "Education for Liberation and Community - A Latin American Contribution," Los Pinares, Bogotá, Colombia, July 25, 1975, trans. by Christine H. Coates and distributed by the World Council of Churches' Office of Education (mimeographed), p. 3).

14. "Comité de Estrategia," Quinta Asamblea, pp. 42, 43.

15. "Informe del Comité de currículo y publicaciones," *Ibid.*, p. 41.

to 17 Latin American countries for the purpose of "immersing" themselves in concrete situations in their search for "new perspectives in Christian education."<sup>16</sup> The experience was "almost overwhelming in its impact..."<sup>17</sup> This led these Christian educators, who came to Lima from all over the world, to ask themselves, among other things, "what it means to educate." To which question the following challenge emerged in response:

to educate is not so much to teach as it is to become committed to a reality in and with the people; it is to learn to live, to encourage creativity in ourselves and in others; and, under God and His power, to liberate humanity from the bonds that prevent the development of God's image.<sup>18</sup>

### *Education Out of Concrete Reality*

Behind this concept of education must be seen the influence of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, who served both as a consultant to the Assembly of the WCCE and the CELADEC Assembly which followed. It was he who in his "pedagogy of the oppressed," tested and worked out among the peasants of Northeastern Brazil, had introduced the notion of a problem-posing education; *i.e.*, an education that emerges out of the concrete reality in which the teaching-learning experience takes place. According to Freire, this type of education requires the "critical immersion"<sup>19</sup> in reality of both the educator and the learner in a common search for the "generating themes" that are "wrapped up" and are constantly "being wrapped up" in the "limit situations" that stand in the way of human beings "as if they were historical determinants ... to which people have no other alternative than adaptation."<sup>20</sup>

In the context of CELADEC, the concept of a "critical immersion" into reality was introduced as a training device for the staff and other leaders. It was recommended at the Lima Assembly that "two training *encuentros* be realized in the following three years; one

16. "Message to the Churches from the World Council of Christian Education Assembly," *Encuentro: New Perspectives for Christian Education*, World Christian Education, 26:3-4 (Third and Fourth Quarters, 1971), 132.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogía del oprimido* (Montevideo: Tierra Nueva, 1970), p. 92.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

at the beginning of the period and the other after a year and a half. ”<sup>21</sup> It was further proposed that these *encuentros* be held in a Latin American country chosen by the Executive Committee, for periods of two weeks each and with the following objectives:

1. [To develop an understanding] of the political, cultural, social, economic and religious reality of the country;
2. [to] . . . reflect upon what this situation says, in particular, to the conclusions of our present assembly;
3. [to reflect] upon the biblico-theologico-pedagogical perspectives that will lie at the bottom of our work throughout the continent;
4. to establish general guidelines for public relations with Protestant denominations, the Roman Catholic Church, secular groups, governmental and/or private;
5. [to train the staff] to set up institutes on pedagogical orientation and Christian education in general at various levels;
6. [to provide training] in the use of the New Life in Christ course.<sup>22</sup>

The proposal went on to suggest the possible involvement of the academic deans of theological seminaries and other educational centers. It was further suggested that the participants be involved “in some kind of pilot project related with Christian and secular education in the locality where the *encuentro*” would take place.<sup>23</sup>

Since 1971, two such *encuentros* have been held, one in Costa Rica and the other in Cuzco, Perú. Writing to the member churches, federations and affiliated councils at the end of the second *encuentro* in 1973, the Executive Committee and staff expressed the significance of their experience for the work of CELADEC.

Coming from almost all the countries of America, we are meeting here not only to review and update our program of service, but also to examine the present situation in the light of the Word of God. That Word has spoken to us as never before.

In these days we have seen that the church cannot be detached from hatred, violence, injustice, and oppression. . . We have seen the church attempt to remedy this situation in obedience to its Lord, seeking new ways to express its faith and to fulfill its mission with greater fidelity than in the past. We feel it imperative for us to explore, confront, and coordinate all of these

21. “Informe del Comité de currículo y publicaciones,” Documento de la IV Asamblea General de CELADEC, La Molina, Lima, Perú, 24-28 de julio de 1971 (mimeographed), p. 29.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

efforts. By the grace of God a new church will emerge which through action and commitment will express the hope for the Kingdom of Love, Justice, Peace, and Liberation that has been revealed to us in Christ.

We must become identified with the persecuted and oppressed people of our countries whose . . . human rights are denied; the fruits of whose labor is stolen; whose aspirations are ignored; who are reduced to subhuman existence. We believe that in these circumstances a new church, faithful to its Lord and responsible to the world, must take the side of the persecuted and oppressed people of the earth. . . We believe that the directive for a new church is to be *the church* of the poor.<sup>24</sup>

Out of these immersion experiences, two leading concerns have emerged. One is ecclesiological in scope. It is clearly voiced throughout the whole of the "Message from Cuzco"; it represents CELADEC's commitment to a new church of the poor, responsible to the world and faithful to its Lord, a community of hope, love, justice, peace, liberation. What are the biblico-theological criteria by which this emerging new church can be identified? What will be the relationship between it and the institutional church? And even more important, how will CELADEC reconcile its organizational dependence on the latter and its commitment to the former? These are some of the thorny questions that will have to be worked out in the immediate future.

### *Methodology for a Liberating Education*

The other concern is methodological. Sufficiently confident of the validity of immersion experience, CELADEC has proposed it as a methodology for the development of a liberating education in Latin America. In a contributing document to the Vth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, it states that since the present educational system of Latin America is closely tied up with contingent alienating structures, educators must take it upon themselves to contribute to the process of liberation.

In order to achieve this goal, we propose forms of education (method and content) which would imply the *permanent immersion* in the historical process through which we live, by means of a direct relationship with the people. Immersion is a specific and real experience which permits the person

24. CELADEC Executive Committee, "Message from Cuzco, Perú," trans. by James and Margaret Goff from the Spanish original in *Educación* (Septiembre-Diciembre, 1973), 1-2.

or group to penetrate the oppressive situation. In this way, the means and forces which lead to the liberation of the people, and therefore of the educator-educated, can be discovered.

The value of this methodology is in its depth and scope. In fact, it immerses the so-called 'educator' in the reality which the people live, these people being the real principal personages of the educational and liberating process.<sup>25</sup>

In order to promote and communicate this methodological approach effectively, CELADEC is planning a series of projects, including a "Latin American Program on Educational Science," "Sessions on the Audiovisual Education of Communicators" and a "Center of Exchange, Information and Diffusion for Popular Education." All of these projects, still in the planning stage, could, if properly and effectively carried out, make a powerful impact upon Latin American education as a whole.

Beyond this, CELADEC will have to wrestle with the question of how to relate such a methodology to the church, given its role as an educational institution. An attempt in this direction was made at a recent seminar on the "Religious Curriculum in Private Schools" — with the participation of a selective number of teachers of religion in church schools — in which the "immersion" approach was amply discussed. As a result of this seminar, it was recommended at the Bogotá Assembly that CELADEC continue to hold these kinds of seminars throughout the Continent, but then with the participation of labor leaders, community organizers and non-religious educators.<sup>26</sup>

### "NEW LIFE IN CHRIST"

The question remains, though, how to help the churches themselves, and not just their educational institutions, to become immersed in the concrete reality. This is why the *New Life in Christ Course* (NLCC) is so relevant to the overall ministry of CELADEC. For it represents the latter's most serious and thorough attempt to reach the churches of the Continent.

25. "Education for Liberation," p. 2.

26. "Informe sobre educación religiosa en colegios privados," Quinta Asamblea, p. 53.



### *The History of the NLCC*

The NLCC goes back to CELADEC's 1962 organizational meeting, where the charter members mandated the Commission to create an experimental curriculum for the congregations of the Continent. As initially conceived, this mandate called for a search for indigeneity in the communication of the gospel in a continent where the majority have a low educational level. A five week Curriculum Conference was held in Lima, Peru in 1963, followed by a five year period of study and experimentation. During this period, the basic premises of the course were tested in concrete congregational situations. This was done through writers' workshops in seven different countries. In these workshops, the vital situation of both the country and the immediate community was carefully studied and correlated to the biblical message. This provided the content for the writing, experimentation with and evaluation of what in traditional Christian education courses would be called "lessons," but which in the NLCC became known as "congregational encounters." Initially, thus, the writers' workshops were the backbone of the basic structure of the Course, which was then further hammered out in concrete congregational settings.<sup>27</sup>

Out of the study and experimental period emerged the first two series (or books), published in 1968, and the broad outline for series three to nine. But as was the case with the first two series, the congregational encounters for the rest of the series continued to be written in workshops held in different countries, a process that was barely finished in 1974.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout the years, the course not only went through a methodological evolution, but also through a process of theological refinement. This becomes especially obvious in the increasingly critical stance that the course, beginning with series six, takes *vis à vis* the socio-economic-political situation of the Continent.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, since they were still in the process of publication at the time that this work was in preparation, series eight and nine could

27. Cf. Dorothy Valenzuela, "New Life in Christ Course, Editor's Report to the Fifth CELADEC Assembly," Bogotá, Colombia, July 29-August 2, 1974 (mimeographed), p. 1.

28. Cf. *Ibid.*

29. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

not be analyzed. Even so, series six and seven give sufficient evidence of this trend.<sup>30</sup>

The NLCC reflects the missiological process of CELADEC. It is CELADEC's example *par excellence* of the quest for greater concreteness that characterized its programmatic performance during the period between the Lima and Bogotá assemblies. In a word, the NLCC is a radiography of CELADEC's developing ministry to the churches.

### *The Structure of the NLCC*

The NLCC is a course of study that presents a dialogic and problem-oriented educational approach to the Christian faith. Its starting point is the binomial term: biblical message-human situation. It attempts to correlate the great themes of the Christian faith with the concrete situations (the problems and challenges) in which Latin American Christians are called to live their faith. For this reason, it has a dialogic and problem-posing methodology. It is congregation-oriented, rather than pastor or teacher-oriented. Its aim is to be an instrument for the transformation of lives, families, communities, rather than a channel for the transmission of a set of doctrines (theological information). Therefore, it speaks of "congregational encounters" rather than "lessons," of "guides" rather than "teachers." It emphasizes participation in an authentic experience of communication in which both the educator and those being educated give and receive, in which both grow. In short, it is a course that calls for and points the way toward the deepening and actualizing of the new life in Christ.

Theologically, the course has what might be called a diachronic-synchronic structure. Diachronic, because it runs through a three-year plan with a God-church-world sequence. Synchronic, because it has two simultaneous horizontal movements running across, one which follows chronologically a call-means-result process, and another with a personal-communal-missionary thematic orientation.

The vertical movement extends from creation to consummation. The first year is dedicated to the triune God, who created the world

30. Cf. CELADEC, *Curso nueva vida en Cristo*, Libro 6: *Servimos al mundo, Libro de encuentros congregacionales* (Santiago: CELADEC, 1972); *Idem*, Libro 7: *Hombre nuevo, pueblo nuevo, Libro de encuentros congregacionales* (Lima: CELADEC, 1973).

and has called humanity to a new life in Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the World, a life that finds fulfillment in a community called into being by the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies and preserves us in the new life. In the second year, the stress falls upon the church, which is called to be a servant, discipling and apostolic community in the world. Emphasis is placed, in the third year, on living the new life in the world as firstfruits of the new creation, as instruments of justice and as a community that looks forward toward the creation of a new heaven and a new earth.

The horizontal process of the new life follows a three trimester cycle. Each book<sup>31</sup> represents a trimester: each trimester emphasizes a part of the new life-process. Thus, in the first trimester, emphasis is put on the call to a new life, a life of service and of exemplary living. In the second trimester, the means of the new life (the salvation which God has wrought in Christ) for the fulfillment of the call into service (discipleship) and for the actualization of the fruits of the new creation (the ethic of the new humanity) are stressed. The third trimester emphasizes the results of the call (the community of faith, its diaconal presence in the world and its pilgrim march toward the consummation of the new creation).

The specific orientation of the course is provided by the other horizontal movement. It encompasses three interconnected areas of the new life that provide the existential objective of each congregational encounter. Area one deals with the personal dimension of the new life in Christ. Its aim is to stimulate believers to a personal encounter with Christ. Area two deals with the communal dimension

31. The thematic program of the whole course according to series (= books) is as follows:

Year I

- Series I: Call to a new life
- Series II: Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour
- Series III: New Life as People of God

Year II

- Series IV: Called to Serve
- Series V: Trained to Serve
- Series VI: We Serve the World

Year III

- Series VII: New Man; New People
- Series VIII: New People; New World
- Series IX: New Heavens; New Earth

of the new life. Its purpose is to lead the congregation to experience the gospel collectively. Area three has to do with the missionary dimension of the new life. It seeks to motivate the community of faith to participation in God's mission in history.

### *The Theology of the NLCC*

The structure of the course has already given us a good picture of its theology. It has a God-centered trinitarian outlook. It does not, however, represent a static view of God. On the contrary, it understands him as the God who acts in history, who works in and through men and women and, therefore, is involved in the social, economic and political structures created by men and women. Accordingly, it revolves around God's mighty acts, from creation to consummation, as recorded and interpreted by the people of Israel and the early Christian community in the Old and New Testament.

This gives the NLCC a salvation-history perspective. For the God of the Bible is a redemptive God, who "from of old" is "working salvation in the midst of the earth" (Ps. 74:12). The history of his mighty acts, recorded and interpreted in Scripture, witnesses to the *salvation*, which he has made available to all in Jesus Christ.

But since the message of the Bible revolves around the *history* of salvation, it cannot be understood apart from the history of *humanity*. For God's mighty deeds do not take place in the air, but in concrete human situations. Thus the insistence of the NT on the Incarnation as truly authentic expression of God. The God of the Bible wants to be known as the God of history and cannot be known apart from his revelation in history. He can only be recognized in the concrete situations of daily life. This is why the NLCC seeks to correlate the biblical message of how God, through his actions in history, deals with men and women, their families and nations, and especially, with the concrete historical situation of the Latin American peoples. To lead those who participate in the course to a living encounter with this God of history; to help them develop a concern and an interest and involvement in the history of this Continent in search of liberation; to initiate them, train them and help them to grow in the life of a community called to follow God into the front lines of his liberating endeavors on behalf of those who suffer oppression and exploitation; to enable them to be firstfruits of a new order of life, instruments of justice and the seed of hope for a new world — this is the aim of the NLCC.

*The Evolutionary Dynamics of the NLCC*

It might well be asked, however, in what ways the NLCC reflects the historical evolution experienced by CELADEC from 1971-74? Have there been any noticeable changes in the history of the course? Is it or is it not an effective and comprehensive device for the fulfillment of the inner-church task of CELADEC?

These are difficult questions to answer, especially since the last two series (books) are still in the process of publication. This places considerable limits upon the possibility of making a proper or final assessment; one's response can only be probable and tentative.

If the interpretation that appears in the post-Bogotá '74 documents is correct, the course has undergone a radical change in its ecclesiology. According to this interpretation, the NLCC sets the ground for

A new ecclesiology, which posits a movement from [foreign] missionary to autochthonous church; from church as institution to church as PEOPLE OF GOD, a church that incorporates everyone who sincerely struggles for the liberation of humanity.<sup>32</sup>

The change in this interpretation does not lie in the movement from foreignness and dependence to indigeneity and self-sufficiency, from ecclesiological introvertedness to missiological openness. Indeed these represent a consistent ecclesiological perspective throughout the seven series published thus far. Rather it would lie in the notion of the church as incorporating "everyone that sincerely struggles for the liberation of humanity."<sup>33</sup>

So far as the first seven series is concerned, one would have to do a lot of eisegesis to come up with this kind of inclusivistic ecclesiology! In fact, the material for the first congregational encounter of series seven would seem to contradict such a view outright.

At the beginning of this book, *New Man; New People* we affirm what is central in the Christian experience. Without new persons, there cannot be a new people. The kingdom of God begins with persons that live in Christ distinctly differently from the way in which they lived formerly.<sup>34</sup>

32. CELADEC, "Programa general presentado al CELAP a través de la Oficina Latinoamericana del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias," Lima, Perú, Febrero, 1975 (mimeographed), p. 42.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Libro 7, p. 9.

The change in the NLCC does not appear to me to be in its ecclesiological but in its socio-ethical outlook. As time passed, its sociological analysis became more concrete, its understanding of the socio-economico-political situation of the Continent more profound, and its ethic more radical. This can be clearly seen on the basis of a comparison of the ethical content of two of the congregational encounters from series three ("New Life as People of God")<sup>35</sup> and six ("We Serve the World"). The former was published in 1969; the latter in 1972.

Congregational Encounter 15, series three, deals with the church's responsibility toward its surrounding community. It asks: What does God expect the church to do about the ills of society? Its answer is that God expects the church to do its utmost to make the world the best possible place for men and women to live in. It states further that the church cannot

be indifferent to the conditions in which . . . people live, to the need for improvement in the material, cultural and spiritual life of the community, [the] nation, the whole world. In order for this task to be successful, Christians must *act* in every moment of their lives, in every situation, as messengers of the Kingdom. . .<sup>36</sup>

The question, though, is, how can Christians be true messengers of the kingdom in every situation of life? Specifically, what can they do for their communities and where should they begin? According to the editors of the course, ". . . Jesus helps us to realize that we can start with the small and humble things, with what is within our reach. Even more, he teaches us that it is our Christian duty to act (Mt. 25)."<sup>37</sup> In other words, to be a messenger of the kingdom one need not participate in complicated projects. All he or she needs is to act out his or her faith in those places that are nearest to him or her, his or her home, work, school, labor union, neighborhood. The important thing is to take advantage of every opportunity that comes along to actualize the faith in the service of others.

The same concern for the involvement of Christians as witnesses to their faith in the problems of society is expressed in Congregational Encounter nine, series six. But whereas in Encounter 15 the

35. *Idem*, Libro 3: *Nueva vida como pueblo de Dios, Libro de encuentros congregacionales* (Santiago: CELADEC, 1969).

36. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

37. *Ibid.*

accent is on *spontaneous personal service*, in this one the stress falls on *planned social action*. The theme here is God's call "to attend the real needs of others." It is not simply concerned with the Christian's social responsibility; it wants to underscore the gospel's call to meet the *real* needs (personal and structural) of people. This becomes quite evident in the following illustration.

Let us consider . . . a person that has a bad headache. It can be that she or he is really sick. But this person also lives in misery because she or he does not have a stable job.

A friend could give her or him an aspirin. She or he could feel better for a while. The friend could also take her or him to the doctor to get her or him healed. . . . But the illness has to do with her or his whole living situation; her or his need of work, of a more comfortable house, of healthier food. Without taking care of this situation, she or he would probably get sick again.<sup>38</sup>

The difference between the content of these two different congregational encounters is not just one of degree. To be sure, the second represents a farther educational stage in the curriculum. It is to be assumed that after a year, the subject matter would be dealt with in a deeper way. At the bottom, however, the two encounters differ in sociological outlook. The first represents a reformist perspective and makes use of an analysis that goes no further than that of merely describing the symptoms of societal problems. It is natural, therefore, that it proposes no other course than that of assistance. The problem with Latin American society, it implies, is its material, cultural and spiritual stagnation. Escape from this situation only requires improvements in the areas of life mentioned. Christians are called to help improve these situations by means of spontaneous diaconal participation in all these areas of human existence.

By contrast, the second encounter has a more critical sociological outlook. God calls Christians not so much to help alleviate the symptoms of suffering, but in the first place to deal with the causes of suffering. The ills of society lie much deeper than they seemed to at first sight. Christians need to exercise a discriminating judgment as part of their social responsibility; they must question, probe and critically think about their respective communities; they must always question the *efficacy* of their service in the world. Their doing so is a sign of their faithfulness to the gospel and their *effectiveness in the fulfillment of their witness in the world*.

38. Libro 6, p. 96.

Such a perspective leads automatically to a fuller socio-economic-political awareness. It is, no surprise, therefore, to see that series six and seven grapple with such issues as the participation of Christians in the struggle for a new social order (revolution), the challenge of a more equitable distribution of wealth, and church-state relations in the light of the latter's ordination as an instrument of justice (cf. Rom. 13) and the former's prophetic calling. This means, of course, that the missiological question is no longer limited only to what the new life in Christ means in our homes, our place of work, our neighborhood, or what it means in relation to the church and the world. The question is: What does it mean in the light of and for the *global Latin American reality*? This is reflected in the wish expressed by the editors in the opening paragraphs of the third-year plan: "We hope that Series 7, 8 and 9 will help us to examine profoundly what place we ought to occupy as Christians in Latin America today."<sup>39</sup>

It is at the level of the socio-ethical that the NLCC reveals the greatest correspondence with the continental strategy of CELADEC and, consequently, with its new missiological outlook. In this respect, the Course has made a qualitative leap. At the same time, the firmness, profoundness and comprehensiveness of its theological content plus its unique methodological approach make it one of CELADEC's most effective instruments in the implementation of its continental strategy, and its greatest asset in the effort to reach the churches of the Continent and lead them to a missiological renewal.

To be sure, the Course still has a long way to go before it can begin to make its weight felt on a broad scale across the Continent. There are still many churches that know very little about it; others are suspicious of both its theological stance and methodological approach. Yet, others are slowly opening themselves to the possibility of incorporating it into their Christian education program.

In the meantime, various churches and organizations have discovered new possibilities for its use. Designed originally for the Sunday church schools, it has now begun to be used in some churches as part of the mid-week Bible study program. Many Catholic parishes have begun to use it in their overall Christian education program and some Protestant congregations have incorporated it into their evangelistic programs. One Protestant continental evangelistic organization used the Course as a model for a city-wide evange-

39. Libro 7, p. 5.



listic effort and one large Pentecostal denomination explored the possibility of editing and publishing it as a denominational program. Toward the end of 1974 it seemed, thus, that the NLCC was beginning to become a genuinely potential instrument for the renewal of the churches.

### ECCLESIOLOGICAL CONFRONTATION

The difference between CELADEC's ecclesiology and that which is held to by the NLCC cannot, however, be passed over without further comment. Indeed, this new ecclesiology marks a split in the heart of CELADEC's praxis that calls into question its theological integrity and its pastoral effectiveness. How long can CELADIC go on officially promoting a vision of the church to which it is apparently no longer committed without at the same time impairing its pastoral task within the churches? How can it maintain its theological integrity without reconciling these two different definitions of the identity of the church? These questions constitute the Achilles heel of CELADEC.

#### *Opposite Ecclesiologies*

It is obvious that the problem of reconciliation between these two different views of the church is a real one. Yet, CELADEC's General Secretary insists that these two views are not necessarily contradictory. Indeed, he argues, one can identify as belonging to the church those who confess Christ as Lord and Saviour and at the same time include, by faith, in its mystery those who, while not confessing Christ verbally, nevertheless do his will and confess him with their lives. We have thus a vision of the church in a breadth dimension which can be seen only with the eyes of faith.<sup>40</sup>

The problem of the church, according to this officer, is that not all who profess the faith live the commitment of the gospel to the poor and the oppressed. There are others who do not make any overt profession of faith but the fruit of their lives reveals them to be standing very close to the kingdom of God. This mysterious fact leads the engaged Christian community to see the mystery of grace behind these "works of mercy" and thus to claim for the kingdom

40. Luis Reinoso, Private interview, Amsterdam, Netherlands, March 11-13, 1975.

those who, while not claiming to be of the household of faith, display in their lives its fundamental characteristics.<sup>41</sup>

There is no doubt that there is a noble and profound missiological intention lying behind this conception of the church. But as Míguez-Bonino has said, referring to the same argument in the larger context of the theology of liberation "the theological framework in which it is articulated is open to serious dangers."<sup>42</sup>

He asks whether such an articulation may not be trapped in a contradiction. There is, on the one hand, an emphasis on the servant-character of the church, and on the other, a claiming "for the Church, or as Church, those who are 'on the right' in terms of the movement of history."<sup>43</sup> But, he asks,

Have we not been in this respect still depending on the traditional dogma of '*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*'? Have we not yielded to the old claim that the Church is destined to become the saved and definitive humanity? Perhaps we have expressed it in an apparently reversed (though also ancient) form, namely, that humanity is destined to become an universal Church. But the difference is finally not so great, because we draw in either case the consequence that all legitimate, authentically humanizing action bears the imprint of its ecclesial destiny and is therefore implicitly or explicitly, latently, if not visibly, Christian and churchly. We have renounced the attempt to subject all things to the ecclesiastical structure, but perhaps at the cost of sacralizing all human activity.<sup>44</sup>

### *Institution vs. Movement*

Closely akin to the above ambiguities in CELADEC's conception(s) of the nature of the church is a more practical one, which has been briefly referred to above as a problem that demands immediate attention. It stems from CELADEC's dialectical relationship with the institutional church. While CELADEC holds many objections to the church, as it exists today,<sup>45</sup> it depends upon this same church for its

41. *Ibid.*

42. Míguez-Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. 162.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

44. *Ibid.*

45. CELADEC sees the institutional church in Latin America as "a necessary part of the process of historical transformation, ... accompanying it as a constant critical ferment in the heart of society." ("Educación para la liberación," *Educación boletín* (Octubre, 1975), 31.). But it questions the way in which the church has been shaped from outside the continental reality. The

livelihood! Equally serious is the ambiguity of CELADEC's attitude toward the church: it is aware of the tremendous social weight of the institutional church and sees the need for its total transformation, and expects it to be an agent of social transformation, but at the same time argues that the church's capacity for change is contingent upon the transformation of society.

This reflects, in the first place, the tight rope-warping strategy which CELADEC is trying to follow at the present time. But how long can it continue to exist without being suffocated by the ecclesiastical institution? This is a danger that CELADEC is perfectly aware of and is trying to avoid by keeping open the channels of communication with the Protestant ecclesiastical structures. Yet there have been recently signs of unrest within CELADEC's constituency<sup>46</sup> which, together with the reactionary wave that is moving through many of the Mainline churches, could become explosive in the not too distant future. But this is a risk that CELADEC rightly considers must be taken — given the present historical situation of Latin America — for the sake of the gospel.

This ambiguous role demonstrates, in the second place, a sort of blind spot both in CELADEC's analysis of the potential for change in

same thing happened, argues Reinoso, with "the ecumenical movements or [organizations]. Many of them were also imported from the outside in order to follow the organizational patterns which had been created in the developed countries. It is from this foreign perspective that we as ecumenical movements are now branded as 'para-ecclesiastical'. We feel that the time has come for us to overcome this dichotomy [which outsiders] continue to joggle with evermore." ([Luis Reinoso,] "A propósito de liberación y unidad," s.Ibid., 35.)

46. We might cite, for example, the criticism of Antonio Rivera Rodríguez, Executive Secretary of the Protestant Council of Churches of Puerto Rico, of the programmatic shift of CELADEC. Addressing himself to the problems of ecumenical organizations in Latin America, he underscores that of

"dramatic changes in orientation. . .[made] on the basis of decisions taken by small groups and in many instances not representative of the totality of our situation. To give an example, on the basis of my present knowledge, I understand that CELADEC has undergone a radical change in its programmatic orientation with regard to Christian Education in Latin America."

Antonio Rivera Rodríguez, "Presencia y función de los organismos evangélicos de cooperación en América Latina: Problemas y programas," Encuentro de Representantes de Organizaciones Evangélicas de Cooperación Latino-americanas Auspiciado por UNELAM, Pozada de Buena Voluntad, San Cristóbal, República Dominicana, 30 de mayo a 5 de junio de 1974 (mimeographed), p. 4.

the institutional church as well as in its expression of commitment to the God who has acted in Jesus Christ and continues to work in the movements of history through his Spirit. What kind of an institution is this that depends upon the world for its renewal and yet can be expected itself to contribute to the transformation of the world? If the institutional church can become an agent of social transformation, can it not also experience a transformation within itself? Is it not so that wherever the church is present, it can be expected to, indeed it must, take organizational forms? And is it not equally so that the Spirit of Christ can also be expected to force the continuous renewal of these forms? What kind of divine activity is it that can transform history and provoke changes in the institutions of society but is not able to transform the institutional face of the church?

These theological ambiguities seem to be symptomatic of an organizational ambiguity similar to that of UNELAM. While it is true that CELADEC enjoys a more coherently defined strategy than UNELAM, its ambiguous relations with institutional Protestantism make it appear to be an organization with a split personality, functioning as it does, on the one hand, as the educational arm of Mainline Protestantism and, on the other, as an avant-guard movement. The question though, is, how much longer it can continue to exist without losing its credibility before the churches and the possibility of effectively contributing to the missiological renewal of Mainline Protestantism?

## CHAPTER IX

### THE QUEST FOR CONCRETENESS IN MISSION

#### *Section IV: The Case of the Church and Society Movement in Latin America (ISAL)*

We now turn to an examination of the most consistently radical Protestant ecumenical organization in Latin America. Its quest for concreteness is more dramatic than that of the other organizations considered for it is conditioned by ISAL's implicit recognition of its intellectual elitist character and the need to overcome this shortcoming in order to be an effective vanguard movement. It is also characterized by a move away from its Protestant heritage in order to become a definite supraconfessional ecumenical Christian movement.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, it involves the rediscovery of the church as an important *locus* of mission. And fourthly, it marks the definitive abandonment of the tendency to make theology a theory of social revolution -- so prevalent in ISAL circles during the 60's -- in favor of viewing it as a critical reflection on the faith in the midst of the struggle for liberation.

#### THE IV CONTINENTAL ASSEMBLY (ÑAÑA)

##### *The Transition from an Elite to a Movement*

The date which symbolically marks this switch in direction is July, 1971, when ISAL held its IV General Assembly in Ñaña, Perú. Four years before, in Montevideo, it had defined itself as an "intermediary group" standing between the revolutionary forces of the Continent and the popular sectors, dedicated to the awakening of the latter's revolutionary consciousness.<sup>2</sup> At Ñaña ISAL reminds itself

1. For a fuller treatment of this process, see chapter X.

2. Cf. ISAL, "Introducción," *América Latina: Movilización popular y fe cristiana* (Montevideo: ISAL, 1971), p. 1. For a critical analysis of ISAL from its beginning in Huampaní (1961) to Montevideo (1967), see C. René Padilla,

of its greatest handicap in the fulfillment of this role: its elitist alienation from the masses.

To be sure, the period from Montevideo to Ñaña had been marked by ISAL's deepening engagement in the Latin American revolutionary process. ISAL had gotten itself involved in the application of the popular pedagogy of Paulo Freire,<sup>3</sup> in urban mission projects at the grass roots level, in leadership training and development and in the analysis of the changing Latin American situation. These tasks led ISAL to take a long, hard look at itself to see whether in fact it was adequately responding to the challenge of the hour and to reflect upon what its programs had to say about the Movement itself and its future.

At Ñaña ISAL took notice of the fact that the overwhelming majority of its followers have "a petit-bourgeois" economic background and an "academic education."<sup>4</sup> They are mostly "professionals, university graduates or students."<sup>5</sup> It recognized, moreover, the numerical limitations of this kind of constituency, which considerably narrows down the sphere of possibilities for "the development of effective activities."<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, ISAL views the present Latin American situation as being unmistakably characterized — at least "in the majority" of the countries — by "the 'emergence of the masses' and . . . the elevation of their political consciousness."<sup>7</sup> The masses are becoming conscious of their situation of suppression, but this consciousness does not move beyond their immediate condition.

Left to themselves, they will probably not be able to articulate and explicitly see their strategic interests on a long-range basis, not because they have, individually, a 'naive consciousness' . . . [or] a 'reflexive consciousness,' but rather because, as a class, their ideology is impregnated with elements of the ideology of the dominant classes.<sup>8</sup>

"Iglesia y Sociedad en América Latina," in *Idem*, ed., *Latinoamérica hoy*, pp. 121-147. For a further analysis, though less extensive, up to Ñaña, see Míguez-Bonino, "Visión del cambio social," pp. 200-201.

3. Cf. Anónimo, *Se vive como se puede: Resultados de una experiencia de aplicación de la pedagogía de Paulo Freire* (Montevideo: Tierra Nueva, 1970).

4. *Movilización popular*, p. 139.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

Accordingly, these masses need to be mobilized so that their political consciousness is deepened, their instruments of action are transformed and their ability effectively to take the political power into their hands is enhanced.<sup>9</sup> This leads ISAL to ask how it can overcome its intellectual-bourgeois handicap so that it can be an effective instrument in service of the mobilization of the emerging masses.

The response of Ñaña is clear and radical: transformation through a "*militant insertion* in the political struggle."<sup>10</sup> This means that ISAL must become a movement totally identified with and immersed in the grass-roots movements that are emerging all over Latin America. Its fundamental task will be that of helping to stimulate the organization of the exploited sectors of the Continent's populace. The question, according to Ñaña, is not whether

to characterize our dependence and define what groups are responsible for maintaining it; the question is: *how can [this dependence] be overcome?* Such a victory will not be the result of a miracle, nor of the inexorable and magic fulfillment of the historical process. To overcome our situation of dependence it is necessary to stimulate the organization of the popular sectors that are exploited by the dominant national classes and by imperialism.<sup>11</sup>

ISAL thus accepts as true the inevitability of a class struggle and sees its mission to be that of stimulating the cause of popular mobilization. Specifically, it punctuates the following tasks: (1) promotion of the work of politicalization in the sphere of popular education; (2) unblocking of the ideological super structure, "especially in the churches"; (3) serving as an "auxiliary of the popular forces of transformation" through pressure, denunciation and/or conscientization; (4) serving as "a center for the interchange of experiences and ideas"; (5) serving as a theological catalyst in the elaboration of a theology "incarnated in the continental reality and its revolutionary process" by linking theological reflection "with concrete action and a critical perspective on the dominant ideology"; and (6) serving as an instrument of coordination of "different movements and initiatives at various levels."<sup>12</sup>

With this renewed vision of its task, ISAL has set out to re-

9: *Ibid.*, p. 162.

10: *Ibid.*, p. 158.

11: *Ibid.*, p. 143.

12: *Ibid.*, p. 171, 172.

organize itself. The position of General Secretary has been converted into a triumvirate executive. Instead of one, there will be now three general secretaries, one for administration and the other two (one for each geographical sector of the Continent) for the coordination of the continental grass-roots operations. The headquarters has been moved to Santiago, the capital that is witnessing the greatest acceleration in the emergence of the masses, which affords unparalleled opportunities for close contact with grass-roots efforts: this location also allows for cooperation with the Secretariat for Urban Mission. Emphasis is now being placed on the encouragement of the self-development of the local (national) ISAL groups within their own concrete realities. The continental staff is urged to participate directly in the political life of the countries where they live by becoming, among other things, militant members of one of the leftist parties. The important thing now is not the organizational perpetuation of the continental office of ISAL, but the commitment of its local groups to the political struggle in their concrete national situation and at the level of the grass-roots movements — as a witness to the faith.

### *Rediscovery of the Church*

At Ñaña there is also a rediscovery of the church as both object and subject of mission. ISAL, which after Montevideo seemed to have given up on the church, has now rediscovered it as a "field and instrument for action."<sup>13</sup> ISAL now acknowledges that "in the churches certain openings are taking place that must be taken in consideration."<sup>14</sup> It is abandoning the self-imposed role of a movement of Christians engaged in the revolutionary process fulfilling a prophetic task *outside* the church and is now taking up the challenge of being a prophetic movement *within* the church, while continuing to maintain a certain critical distance.

Accordingly, it proposes penetrating the churches in order to help create "the conditions through which their members can accede to an engagement with the popular classes."<sup>15</sup> Such a missionary orientation is informed by the vision of a church of and for the people. In this sense, the notion of indigeneity expressed in Com-

13. Míguez-Bonino, "Visión del cambio social," p. 201.

14. *Movilización popular*, p. 146

15. *Ibid.*



mission One of the III CELA is carried one step further. There is a call for the "nationalization" of the churches but within the framework of a concept that not only includes "the adoption of autochthonous or regional cultural forms" but also "the identification of the church with the interests and the historical destiny of the people" that it serves.<sup>16</sup> This implies also leading the church to take "a vow of poverty"; *i.e.*, to put all of its resources -- "human and ideological" -- at the service of the struggle of the oppressed for their liberation. In the words of the gospel, becoming poor so that the poor can become rich (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9).

If this is to happen, however, there must be a change in the old ecclesiastical structures. Without this, it is impossible to build a correct view of the churches' place in "the present Latin American situation and of the demands that it poses."<sup>17</sup>

It is in this context that Ñaña suggests a classification of "groups" in order to determine the type of action that is required and their praxeological possibilities. There are the "contesting groups."<sup>18</sup> These groups, which are in ideological conflict with the church hierarchies, should be encouraged and supported because they expose "the contradictions of the system at the ecclesiastical level."<sup>19</sup> Then there are those groups that represent the interests of the ruling classes in the church. These ought to be openly and categorically denounced. Finally, there are "the majority groups that are living in multiple alienations, including religious alienation. . ."<sup>20</sup> Ñaña suggests "the formulation of a pedagogy that permits these latter groups to become aware of their situation."<sup>21</sup>

16. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 149, 150.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 150. It is at this point that a trend can be observed in CELADEC toward closer relationship with ISAL. CELADEC accepts the challenge of Ñaña for the formulation of a popular pedagogy. It is no coincidence that the first "immersion *encuentro*" made the following statement of purpose: "CELADEC will have as its mission. . . [the] translation . . . into popular language. . . of the works of ISAL and/or other entities. . ." interpreting the "Latin American reality." CELADEC, "The History and Purpose of CELADEC" (Lima: CELADEC, 1972), (mimeographed), p. 2.

### *Theology Out of the Grass Roots*

Not only did Nãña rediscover the church as an important "mission field" and an instrument for the cause of liberation; it also underscored the theological importance of the engagement of Christians in the struggle for liberation. This, it said, must constitute the fundamental reference of an authentic liberating theology.

To be sure, the relation between theology and praxis was not new in ISAL circles. This had been a developing conviction ever since El Tabo (1965), when the notion of a contextual theology of history began to dominate the theological reflection of ISAL.<sup>22</sup> After Montevideo, ISAL moved, under the theological leadership of Rubem Alves, in the direction of a theology of hope, grounded on the biblical paradigm of the Exodus, oriented toward a Marcusean-type analysis of society and in critical dialogue with Jürgen Moltmann. This led to the globalization of the initial questions of the theology of liberation which, in turn, led to an awareness of the need to sharpen its *theological methodology*.

Nãña affirmed what had become by then a growing conviction among Latin American theologians, Catholic and Protestants alike: Theology cannot be done simply in dialogue *with* political praxis, but must be done *in the midst* of a political engagement. Its task is to reflect critically on the meaning of the faith in the midst of that praxis; to attempt "to understand the symbols and categories of faith in the framework of the process of liberation, supporting and not blocking this process."<sup>23</sup>

This led to an ever-growing suspicion of theological formulations that do not emerge out of the struggle of the people. Theologies out of North America and Europe along with those in Latin America which pretend to speak *to* or *about* the praxis of liberation are being rejected. What is needed is not "the repetition of theologies formulated in opulent societies," nor the formulation of "a theology

22. Cf. *América hoy: Acción de Dios y responsabilidad del hombre* (Montevideo: ISAL, 1966). See, especially, chapter I, "'Huampaní', 'El Tabo': dos etapas y varios descubrimientos," pp. 11ff. and the reflections of Richard Shaull in chapter IV, "... y un Dios que actúa y transforma la historia," pp. 57ff.

23. *Movilización popular*, p. 150. On the relationship between praxis and theology, see the work of ISAL's Studies Secretary, Assmann, *Teología*, especially pp. 13-138.

for the people," but "a theology of the people."<sup>24</sup> Nãña put ISAL at the service of such a theology.

Behind Nãña were two theological consultations held respectively in August, 1970 and June, 1971 in Buenos Aires under the auspices of ISAL's Secretariat of Studies. The second one was especially significant for the work of Nãña. It dealt with "The Theological Task in a Context of Liberation."<sup>25</sup> Although the documents of this consultation were reproduced much later, and then only partially, they reflect a fundamental methodological concern geared to the sharpening of the process of theological reflection in the struggle for liberation.

It is significant that this accent on the concrete situation as a starting point for a theology of liberation, on an "effectively historical hermeneutic" for the interpretation of the "now of the word of God" and on the praxis of liberation as the reality of which theology speaks, falls simultaneously with open criticism of ISAL's leading theological voice of the post-Montevideo period.

The real point of departure of a 'theology of liberation' for Latin America must necessarily be the specific process of the liberation of dominated peoples. . . In this sense Rubem Alves' point of departure -- a much too vague convergence of the revolutionary energies in the world -- in his still valuable and innovative book, *Theology of Human Hope*, does not seem to us to be sufficiently Latin American.<sup>26</sup>

Thereafter Alves was criticized for being too closely tied to the categories of the North Atlantic world, and Tierra Nueva, ISAL's publishing arm, even refused to publish the Spanish version of his book, *Tomorrow's Child*.<sup>27</sup>

What is at stake in this criticism is not just rejection of theological content but more importantly of theological methodology. It is an attempt to make more specific a notion that was vaguely present in past ISAL theological reflection.<sup>28</sup> To be sure, theology must start

24. *Movilización popular*, p. 150.

25. Hugo Assmann, "Nota previa: La dinámica de un encuentro de teología," in Assmann, ed., *Pueblo oprimido*, p. 155.

26. *Idem*, "Implicaciones socioanalíticas e ideológicas del lenguaje de liberación," *Ibid.*, p. 163.

27. Cf. Rubem Alves, *Tomorrow's Child: Imagination, Creativity and the Rebirth of Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

28. Cf. Rubem Alves, "Theology and the Liberation of Man," *In Search of a*

from the "historical now"; it must have a political orientation; it must speak the language of liberation. This requires, however, three simultaneous theological moments: (1) a socio-economico-political scientific reading of the concrete reality (and not just a speculative, vague and general consciousness of the human situation); (2) "the decided option" for specific "political theses"; and (3) a "decisive ethical step." These political theses are clear consequences of the socio-economico-political analysis. They entail, nevertheless, an "ulterior . . . ethical step which, as such, is not just derived from the analysis itself, but is nourished in the human capacity to assume history responsibly. . . ."<sup>29</sup>

Each of these moments constitute a level of reflection: analysis of concrete reality, theological interpretation and strategical and tactical reflection. The first level poses the fundamental question(s) of the process of liberation, the second leads to a political option, specifically that of socialism,<sup>30</sup> and the third reflects on how to best implement this option.<sup>31</sup>

The awareness of the three simultaneous moments mentioned above as essential for theology in order for it to become "historical, political and operational in the praxis"<sup>32</sup> of liberation constitutes the fundamental methodological difference between the pre and the post-Ñaña period. This is why Ñaña puts so much emphasis on reflection at the level of the struggle at the grass roots. It is there, ultimately, where faith becomes concrete, where Christ becomes real, where the Christian mission is fulfilled<sup>33</sup> and where theology becomes praxeological.<sup>34</sup>

*Theology of Development* (Geneva: Committee on Society, Development and Peace, 1970); *Idem*, "Theses for a Reconstruction of Theology," Documents, IDOC-International North American Edition, 31 October, 1970.

29. Assmann, "Presentación," *Pueblo oprimido*, p. 15.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

33. See Luis Rivera-Pagán, "Teología y praxis de liberación," *Ibid.*, p. 173. Says Rivera-Pagán: "Theology is critical and systematic reflexion on the mission of the Christian community. Missionary praxis is a central problem. Theology is the theory of Christian praxis, of mission."

34. See José Míguez-Bonino, "Nuevas perspectivas teológicas," *Ibid.*, p. 205, where he states:

"What is the reality of which theology speaks? The answer is . . . clear: *this*

After Ñaña ISAL's theological endeavors have revolved around projects that stimulate a critical reflection on the march. A bulletin, *Pasos*, was created as an instrument of such reflection. It seeks to promote the intercommunication of reflections on the faith that emerge out of the experiences of Christians engaged in the struggle for liberation. It is interdisciplinary in that it tries to bring together socio-analytical reflections, theological interpretations of the Latin American situation and reflections on pastoral issues. These three levels of reflections are not always clearly delineated. Moreover, the content is not systematically ordered. Even the material and format<sup>35</sup> give evidence of the provisional nature of the Bulletin. The point is, nevertheless, clear: these are *steps* in the historical reflection on the faith; theological drafts produced in the praxis of liberation; foundations for the elaboration of a "theory of a definitive practice," which will serve as "a criticism of society and the Church insofar as they are called and addressed by the Word of God."<sup>36</sup>

The *Pasos* experiment had at least a twofold significance for the task of theology in general and the work of ISAL in particular. As to the former, the *Pasos* approach, typical of the theological process described in chapter III, constitutes both an indirect critique of the traditional way to integrate theology and a demonstration of an alternative proposal. Theology cannot be simply divided by subject matter according to an abstract and systematic reflection that supports itself.<sup>37</sup> Rather it must reflect upon the historical reflection of the faith, dealing simultaneously with concrete social reality, the meaning of the faith in that situation and the way in which it (theology) can be made more concrete, visible and effective. The levels of reflection are thus defined by the praxis of faith. The social sciences are brought in as indispensable tools in the theological task.

*concrete reality in which we find ourselves*, a reality which in Latin America has to be designated with very precise terms such as conscientization, imperialism, international market, monopolies, social classes, developmentalism, oligarchies. Theology speaks of the struggle of the people for its liberation. Here is the 'citizenship in the everyday world of mankind' by which theology can recuperate a language, a reference, a concretion, that had been lost in a world without religion or metaphysics."

35. It is mimeographed rather than printed in inexpensive legal size paper with the title section covering the top part of the first page.

36. Gutiérrez, *Liberation*, p. 11.

37. *Idem*.

The traditional disciplines -- Biblical studies, history, systematics, ethics -- are integrated into the process as the situation is being laid open by the scientific social analysis. All of this, however, is focused on the praxis of communication in the struggle for liberation: *i.e.* on the way to making the reality announced in the gospel more concrete and effective.

Whereas in traditional theological circles the social sciences enter only at the level of "application," in this new approach, symbolized in *Pasos*, they are incorporated into the very process of theologizing. In this way, the dichotomy between truth and action, reflection and application is overcome. Truth is discovered in action. Truth does not have an independent, autonomous existence. It is verified in the obedience of faith. Therefore, the practical task of theology, usually brought in as an appendix to the theological process, becomes now the very *locus* of that process, its point of departure and its goal.

This does not mean, of course, that there is now no more place for specialization within the theological enterprise. Obviously, the contribution of the exegete, the historian, the ethicist, missiologist, educator, homiletician, etc., will always be needed. Now, however, the social scientist is brought in as a fundamental part of the theological team. Even more, on this construction of things no theological discipline ought to function independently of the others and all are required to do their work in the struggle for liberation. This puts the "theologian" in direct contact with the people. He or she theologizes, thus, as part of a community to whose symbols and categories he or she must be responsive and to whose critique he or she must subject himself or herself.

To be sure, the *Pasos* approach, as well as the theological movement which it sought to bolster (the theology of liberation), raises many questions, both ecclesiological and methodological, theoretical and practical; questions which are not so easy to answer and which will have to be solved as time passes. Even so, this approach has gone a long way toward providing a concrete example of what Nãña was talking about when, following the concerns expressed at Buenos Aires, it proposed a "theology of the people." Likewise, it has made available raw theological materials that have been used in other more systematic reflections.

It is precisely because ISAL recognized the provisional nature of the *Pasos* project, that it also recognized the need of providing other

types of materials that would deal in depth with problems arising out of the engagement of Christians in the continental struggle. Thus ISAL's Secretariat of Studies began to publish another series of materials, *Cuadernos de Estudio*, to help Christians further along in their reflection. The Secretariat of Publications continued to publish the journal *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, which had become perhaps the most important platform for the socio-theological thought of ISAL; *Fichas de ISAL*, a condensed, scholarly, news bulletin with up-to-date information on key events in Latin America; and an impressive list of books dealing with education, theology, sociology and politics, all revolving around the process of liberation. It had been through its publication endeavors that ISAL had made its greatest impact across the continent. This effort continued at an even stronger pace and with an even sharper focus in the wake of Ñaña.

The materials of ISAL were for the most part being distributed through the local or national base-groups linked with the Movement. The greatest portion of their content was emerging out of the deliberation and experience of these groups, who, in turn, were using them to deepen their ongoing reflection. These materials also reached the hands of the general public through an efficient distribution link with religious and non-religious book stores and joint-publication and -distribution ventures with two large European-Latin American publishing companies, *Ediciones Sígueme* and *Siglo XXI Editores*. Moreover, they became important study materials in institutes, seminaries and university centers.

Thus, while the Secretariats of Studies and of Publications were busy working on the publication of the different articles, experiences and books that were to be distributed in and through the national groups, the General Secretaries in charge of grass-roots operations were busy trying to keep in close contact with these groups, helping them along with their respective popular education, community organization or urban mission projects, and looking for meaningful local reflection experiences to be shared at the continent-wide level.

### THE COUP THAT UPSET THE MOVEMENT

This was the general direction in which the ISAL Movement was going at the time of the Chilean *coup d'état* on September 11, 1973. This event, while the most significant for groups, movements and organizations like ISAL, was far from being the only one of its kind

in the early seventies. The short-lived popular regime of General Torres had already been overthrown in Bolivia, and with its demise ISAL, which in that country represented one of the most forward looking and active ecumenical groups, was forced to go underground. In Uruguay, the situation became more and more repressive. And in Brazil the doors had, for all practical purposes, been closed for several years.

Chile, however, had been the one place in Latin America where the struggle for liberation seemed to have one of its greater chances for success via a revolution which would not exact a high social cost. It had been the meeting place of the First Latin American Encounter of Christians for Socialism. It had been the one country where Christians of all confessions, not least the largely proletarian Protestant Pentecostals, had become immersed in a dialectical process whose ultimate goal was the transformation of the history of oppression, exploitation, colonialism and neo-colonialism of the Chilean nation. Above all, this had been the country where the emergence of the masses was thought to have been taking place at an accelerated pace.

### *Dispersion and Reorganization*

The overthrow of Salvador Allende not only upset this process, but forced those Christians committed in the struggle for a new social order to pause (even as they were escaping for their very lives! ) to take a second look at the process itself to see what had gone wrong. This also meant that organizations like ISAL had to leave Chile, taking refuge in one or another neighboring country.

For ISAL, there were very few options left. At first, two of the staff members took refuge in Mendoza, Argentina. The office of the Secretariat of Urban Mission -- which had been involved in a serious clash with the rest of the ISAL Movement,<sup>38</sup> threatening to set itself up as an autonomous organization -- had been transferred back, prior to the Chilean coup, to Buenos Aires. One of the General Secretaries also returned to his home country in the Caribbean. Meanwhile, the Uruguayan government banned ISAL from the country, confiscating its publishing company, and forcing the Secretariat of Publications

38. Cf. MISUR Executive Committee, "Report of the Latin American Urban-Industrial Mission Secretariat," Santiago, Chile, October, 1971 (mimeographed).



into exile, thereby making it necessary for Tierra Nueva to transfer its operations to Buenos Aires. Finally, the Secretariat of Studies was transferred to Central America where Hugo Assmann took up a teaching post at the University of Costa Rica. By early 1974, ISAL's continental staff had been scattered all over the Continent.

In the midst of this harsh reality, a meeting was convened of the staff and the Executive Committee in March of 1974 in Mexico City to consider the situation and take some provisional steps. It was there that the decision was made to do away with ISAL as such, continuing operations in a completely decentralized form, with each secretariat carrying out its work under a name descriptive of its function.

Under the new setup, the Movement continues to make its weight felt, although in a different way. The journal *Cristianismo y Sociedad* began a new era with a supplement, *Cuadernos de Cristianismo y Sociedad*, geared to provide contemporary information, documentation and texts dealing with "various fields of our work, from our Christian experience to our political practice."<sup>39</sup> The transfer of Tierra Nueva to Buenos Aires opened up a new local market for its books, which has made it necessary to double the production. *Fichas de ISAL* was at first transformed into a new publication, *Fichas Latinoamericana*, but later discontinued. A new paperback series, *Colección proceso*, appears to have taken its place.

In the area of studies, the *Pasos* project, after almost a year of interruption, has been resumed with a new heading and format and a sharper focus.<sup>40</sup> This is complemented by a series of translation workshops in which scholarly biblico-theological studies prepared by young Latin American scholars and oriented to the concrete situations of Latin America are being "translated" into popular language illustrated with cartoons. The objective is to penetrate the mental structure of the masses of Latin America who are at least

39. Tierra Nueva, *Cuadernos de Cristianismo y Sociedad*, 1:1 (Junio 1974), cover page.

40. Instead of one, three series are now published. Series A is a periodical collection of extended essays, printed in the form of a mimeographed booklet and published twice or three times a year, critically reflecting upon the Latin American reality. Series B consists of shorter documents published once or twice a month and reprinted from diverse sources. Series C contains shorter essays printed more or less in the same format as that of the old *Pasos*, published twice or three times a year and dealing with conceptual definitions.

"sociological" Christians and who, as the most recent political events show, have been greatly used by the reactionary and repressive forces of the Continent.

### *Facing up to Fundamental Questions*

This latter project brings us to the fundamental questions with which the Movement has been trying to cope with in recent times. What happened? What happened to the emerging mass movement of which Ñaña spoke so optimistically? What happened to the political awakening of the Continent? What happened to the Exodus? Were not the majority of the countries marching toward the promised land? Were not the Torres regime in Bolivia, the triumph of Allende's Popular Unity Movement in Chile, the triumph of Peronism and the subsequent return of Perón to Argentina signs of this process? What happened to the new critical consciousness that had been as evident throughout the official Roman Catholic Church after Medellín, 1968, and the hope that it might lead this Church, with its enormous weight, to decisive participation in the process of liberation? What happened to the unmasking of the forces of domination that had supposedly followed the collapse of the Alliance for Progress and the Christian Democratic Movement in the late sixties? What happened to the task of unmasking the neo-colonial ideology in society and in the church, that the incipient theology of liberation had undertaken ever since its emergence in 1970? What happened to the process of conscientization that had begun to take on an accelerated pace in the early seventies?

These are quantitative questions. For the facts are quite clear: Latin America is worse off in 1975 than it was in 1969. A wave of brutal repression followed one of the most promising periods in the history of this Continent. The institutional church did not live up to its expectations. The great hopes sparked by Medellín soon vanished as a mere illusion.

These questions, though, have a qualitative orientation. What has *really* happened and what does this mean in terms of the process of liberation and the historical task of movements like ISAL? This is the question that *Cristianismo y Sociedad* tries to reflect upon in the last two issues of 1974. Apart from the general interest that these reflections may have for those of us who are committed to the integral liberation of Latin America, the problem concerns us here

only insofar as it throws light upon ISAL's quest for a more concrete engagement.<sup>41</sup>

First of all, it has become evident that the drastic regressive changes experienced throughout the Continent are not simple historical accidents. They reveal, on the one hand, the real effective strength of the forces of domination and, on the other, the ambiguity of the Latin American social situation. They show that domination today is not so much a matter of expanding the process of exploitation but of maintaining it, of keeping the masses of the Third World, including those of Latin America, from posing a threat to the international economic system. Thus, the forces of domination, rather than seeking expanded economic advantages, are concentrating on repression and maintenance of the *status quo*. This is why more money is spent on "armaments and ideological machinery than in the search for new slaves and new means of exploitation. . ."<sup>42</sup>

A fundamental error of ISAL, and other similar groups, was in assuming that a real movement of the masses would occur when they became aware of the contradictions of society. These groups did not take account of the fact that the class structure of Latin America is shaped in the image and likeness of developed countries so as to make possible the latter's continued existence. In this sense, it can be said that the Latin American class struggle takes place in reference to the social dynamics of the metropolis. A bourgeoisie and a proletariat have been created to make possible the continuing existence of the class structure of the dominant society. When the stability of the former is threatened by signs of disruption and disintegration in the latter, pressure must be exerted to reimpose stability and normalcy.<sup>43</sup>

41. What follows is an analysis of the situation as ISAL sees it in the light of the following articles: Julio Barreiro, "Presentación: ¿Qué hacer?," *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, XII (Segunda época): 40/41 (2a y 3a entregas, 1974), 3-6; Pedro Negre-Rigol, "Las clases sociales en América Latina," *Ibid.*, 51-60; Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Praxis de liberación y fe cristiana (Testimonios de la Iglesia en América Latina: 1969-1973)," *Ibid.*, 110-136; Hugo Assmann, "Medellín: La desilusión que nos hizo madurar (Sugerencias de autocritica para cristianos comprometidos)," *Ibid.*, pp. 137-143; Equipo, "De la época de las ilusiones al tiempo del realismo," *Ibid.*, No. 42 (4a entrega, 1974), 7-31; Pedro Negre-Rigol, "Los cristianos, la liberación y sus opciones pastorales," *Ibid.*, 32-42.

42. Negre-Rigol, "Las clases sociales," *Ibid.*, p. 60.

43. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 60.

What has happened in Latin America is that the repressive power of the dominant society has been unleashed in impressive proportion. In consequence, a process of "demobilization of all the popular organizations has followed."<sup>44</sup> There was a fundamental error in thinking that the popular sectors of society could come to a political awareness of their situation and take over the power without an immediate reaction on the part of the dominant forces to domesticate these sectors through "daily castrating compensations."<sup>45</sup>

In the totality of the possible publicity orchestration, the most elemental crumbs become part of the miracles. Brazil is the most perfect example to understand this phenomenon of the immobilization of the social conscience. It does not seem probable - once stability and frank progress have been achieved for several years - that criticism of the imposed models will emerge spontaneously from 'the heart of the masses.'<sup>46</sup>

But if Nãña's perception that the movement of the masses was beginning to dominate the Latin American reality in the early seventies turned out to be a superficial reading of the situation, would this not also imply that perhaps ISAL's image of itself was also out of focus? For in spite of all of ISAL's efforts to be an effective instrument of popular mobilization, its performance as a mass movement in the post-Nãña period proved to have been ineffective and limited. Its affiliated local groups remained the same, small intellectual minorities, which at most could help out with a conscientization class here and there in a margined sector of the city or cooperate in sponsoring a local community organization project. The bulk of ISAL's endeavors and the most penetratingly influential aspect of its praxis continued to be at the analytical level, as a catalytic agent for studies at the level of social reality and at the educational and theologico-ideological levels, through seminars and leadership training programs and its vigorous publication program.

It was in this context that Hugo Assmann said to me in an interview: At Nãña there was an erroneous analysis of ISAL; the later was seen as a mass movement, which it is not. As it has turned out, ISAL is "a schizophrenic organization" which at best has served as "a Central Project Agency of useful service and an ideological front."

44. Barreiro, "Presentación," *Ibid.*, p. 6.

45. Assmann, "Medellín," *Ibid.*, p. 142.

46. *Ibid.*

Therefore, says Assmann, ISAL ought not to magnify its grass-roots work. Rather the significance of ISAL should be reduced to its real proportions, which means putting the accent on publications and studies.<sup>47</sup>

In the second place, the events of the last several years have revealed how complex the institutional church in Latin America really is. The growing disillusionment with the Catholic hierarchy's lethargy in the implementation of Medellín had reached a high point by the middle of 1973.<sup>48</sup> At first, it was thought that this lethargy was simply a matter of unfaithfulness to the commitment of '68. But was this an adequate reading of Medellín? , asks Assmann. Was it not rather an illusion to think that because the hierarchical leadership of the Church had allowed itself to be led to make a verbal "promise" that this would necessarily guarantee its decisive participation in the process of liberation? For the fact of the matter is that the hierarchical church was not aware of its historical role in Latin America, and if it was, it was not willing to throw its weight into the balance on the side of the oppressed. In this sense, "Medellín fulfilled a blinding role, covering the limited character of the real possibilities of the hierarchical church."<sup>49</sup>

Not only did militant Christian groups like ISAL not become aware of this fact soon enough. They also did not really understand the importance of maintaining pastoral links with the official church, " 'magnifying' at the subjective level their political function, without collating it with the areas of possible alliance in the global context of

47. Hugo Assmann, Private interview held in San José, Costa Rica, January 7, 1975. Cf. Equipo, "De . . . ilusiones al . . . realismo," *Ibid.*, pp. 10-17.

48. See, for example, the following documents: Equipo de Pasos, "El mensaje esencial de Medellín: Intento de versión popular," *Pasos*, No. 62 (6 de agosto de 1973), 1-4; Hernán Parada C., ss.cc., "Crónica del pequeño Concilio de Medellín," *Cuadernos de Estudios* No. 1 (ISAL); "Medellín cinco años después sigue el desafío," *Ibid.*, No. 5; Juan Luis Segundo *Acción pastoral latinoamericana: Sus motivos ocultos* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1972); see the review of the latter by Alejandro Bonasso, in *Pasos* No. 57 (2 de julio de 1973), 1-6; Hernán Parada C., ss.cc., "Hace 5 años. . . En Medellín. . . (Marco histórico de un 'gran momento')," *Ibid.*, No. 59 (16 de julio de 1973), 1-8; Samuel Ruíz Obispo de Chiapas, "Los cristianos y la justicia en América Latina," *Ibid.*, No. 60 (23 de julio de 1973), 1-16; and José Comblin, "Medellín: Problemas de interpretación," *Ibid.*, No. 64 (20 de agosto de 1973), 1-5.

49. Assmann, "Medellín," *Ibid.*, p. 138.

Christian pastoral action."<sup>50</sup> This explains why, in spite of the many Christian "martyrs" that Latin American Christianity has known in recent years, the established church recognizes so little of itself in them. This also explains why the bridge of communication between Christians engaged in the process of liberation and the popular sectors of practising Christians has been so ineffective.<sup>51</sup>

Paradoxically, however, at such a politically dark moment, when so many doors seem to be closing, the institutional church (especially the hierarchy) remains one of the few bastions from which a genuinely effective criticism of the existing order can be made. Thus the increasingly critical stance of large sectors of the Brazilian episcopacy *vis à vis* the present government's economic model and the uneasiness of the Chilean bishops with the passive, non-critical role that the military *junta* is trying to assign them.<sup>52</sup> What does this mean for the historical praxis of faith?

According to Assmann, it means that "a more direct and sincere presence in the pastoral activities of the church emerges today as an imperative of profound significance."<sup>53</sup> Pedro Negre-Rigol goes a step further. He states that the theology of liberation made a fundamental error in limiting itself to reflection emerging out of the commitment of several Christian groups immersed in the struggle for liberation and in dealing only in sequence with pastoral concerns as a sort of pastoral appendage. To be sure, says Negre-Rigol, it was a reflection that emerged out of the insertion of these groups in the struggle of the majorities. But this was a political not a religious insertion. There was a religious distance between these committed groups and the masses.

Hence the importance of beginning and not ending with the pastoral. Put in another way, it is not a question of 'applying' the theological reflections of certain Christian groups (or elites) that have come near to the people. Because they only came near in the political, not in the religious realm. The institutional church had largely distanced itself from these groups and their work, and it is through the channel of the institutional church that popular religiosity of course inevitably passes.<sup>54</sup>

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 140, 141.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 140, 141.

54. Negre-Rigol, "Los cristianos," p. 40.

But involvement at the level of the pastoral activity of the church is not just important for the Latin American process of liberation alone. For it so happens that Latin America represents "the Christian lot" of the oppressed Third World. Does this not mean, then, that this church should take upon itself the missionary challenge of -- in the words of Assmann -- re-Christianizing "the universal church, whose axes of command are largely trapped in the mechanisms of the oppressing world"?<sup>55</sup> Unfortunately, the Latin American church has yet to become fully aware of this responsibility. In this connection, its pastoral activities ought to take on a fundamentally prophetic and missiological importance.

Out of the agony and frustration of the present situation, Christian vanguard movements like ISAL<sup>56</sup> seem to be re-discovering the church -- and not just in the sense of its being a political field of action and an instrument in the process of liberation. It is now becoming clear that working in and with the church is not only indispensable in the Latin American struggle for liberation, but also in reference to world Christianity. The Latin American church, it can therefore be said, is standing before a new missionary challenge: the re-evangelization of the universal church.

55. Assmann, "Medellín," p. 141. In an earlier study, Assmann had briefly touched upon this missiological notion. Cf. *Opresión-liberación*, p. 148.

56. Even the notion "avant-guard" is undergoing critical screening as the following statement shows:

"Priority was not always given at the level of the concrete to the forces of the people in the struggle for liberation. It was assumed that these forces would become organized as the 'vanguards' began to appear. How to be a vanguard, what are the characteristics of such groups, who would belong to it, what ideologies and/or revolutionary theories would be postulated, these were the concerns that were given priority in the debates in leftist circles in Latin America; these discussions were often very profound but were not always as productive of efficacy as they should have been, especially in terms of finding and building up the support that the people should give to groups really committed to the task of change.

We believe that much has been learned from our accumulated experiences about what can and should be a 'vanguard' . . . But now, instead of worrying about who is in the vanguard (if we can really speak of a vanguard in a situation in which those who are 'out in front' are often 'going it alone'), we must focus our attention primarily on the forces of the people, and then the whole people, and not just those that are nearest."

Equipo "De . . . ilusiones . . . al realismo," p. 27.

The awareness of this challenge could be said to be one of the fruits of the experience of immersion in the concrete reality of exploitation and oppression that many Christians have experienced in Latin America during the last several years. This experience has further clarified what was referred to at Ñaña as a theology of the poor.

✓ In his reprinted article,<sup>57</sup> "*Praxis de liberación y fe cristiana*," Gustavo Gutiérrez articulates the meaning of this immersion experience in relation to the theological process of liberation. According to him, what has happened theologically in Latin America during the past several years is that a number of Christians – laity and clergy – have experienced an authentic conversion to the world of the poor and the exploited. They have discovered Christ anew in rereading the gospel from within the situation of frustration and aspiration of the oppressed sectors of Latin American society. Out of the discovery of Christ's presence among the poor, they have sought to become more identified with their aspirations and to stand in ever greater solidarity with the latter's conscious or unconscious struggle for a new order. In this way they have discovered that the gospel ex-

57. Gustavo Gutiérrez, "*Praxis de liberación y fe cristiana*," *Signos de liberación: Testimonios de la iglesia en América Latina: 1969-1973* (Lima: CEP, 1973), pp. 13-36. This same article appears in a revised form and under another title in *Concilium*. Cf. Gustavo Gutiérrez, "*Praxis de liberación: Teología y anuncio*," *Concilium* No. 96: *Praxis de liberación y fe cristiana: El testimonio de los teólogos latinoamericanos* (Junio 1974), 353-374. It is interesting to note that Gutiérrez' theologizing takes place in relation to pastoral experience. To be sure, there is a slight touch of what Negre-Rigol identifies as Christian "elitism" in his reference to those Christians who have experienced a "conversion to poverty." But this reference is free of the "religious distance" that the latter finds in the theology of liberation. Could it not be that Gutiérrez' understanding of this theological process is the embodiment of what Negre-Rigol means when he states: "Instead of searching for an application of the Theology of Liberation, a theology as preamble or introduction to a popular *pastorate* of liberation should be initiated"? (Negre-Rigol, "Los cristianos," p. 40). Indeed, Gutiérrez is qualifying the notion of "a theology of the people," alluded to at Ñaña, by defining its fundamental characteristics in terms of pastoral experience and in profoundly pastoral categories. This explains why ISAL (which traditionally had shown very little concern for the pastoral), when it became aware of the importance of pastoral action in the historical praxis of faith, turns to Gutiérrez, incorporating into its theological thinking one of his most recent and pastoral theological endeavors.



perienced and announced in "identification with the poor, calls for a Church that stands in solidarity with the popular classes of the Continent."<sup>58</sup> This will lead to a confrontation and break with the established church. Such a break, however, must be a profound one if it is to be effective; and it will not be so "if it is only expressed through personal anguish, identity crisis, emotional reaction, impatience, no matter how legitimate these may be."<sup>59</sup> This only leads to intra-ecclesiastical contention, not to the root of the problem.

What is needed, therefore, are authentic models of Christian communities that demonstrate various modes of being present in the world which go "beyond the rigidity of the institution."<sup>60</sup> This entails the creation of new congregational models in which it becomes clear that "the private owners of the goods of this world" are not "the owners of the Gospel."<sup>61</sup> Such groups will be further known by their prophetic proclamation of a church totally consecrated to the "always critical and creative"<sup>62</sup> service of those who are striving to be authentically human.

Only by taking root in the marginalized and exploited classes, nay only by emerging out of them, from their aspirations, their interests, their struggles, their cultural categories, will [such Christian groups] be forged into a new People of God, that will make the gospel message heard by all men and women and be a sign of the liberation of the Lord of history.<sup>63</sup>

What Ñaña vaguely referred to as the emergence of a new church, a church of the people, is now pointed to as a real possibility. This would not be credible, says Gutiérrez, "if it were not already outlined, albeit timidly, in the living essays that are before our very eyes in several places of the Continent."<sup>64</sup> Out of these experiments, has begun to emerge a new understanding of the faith. To be sure, this new understanding has already undergone and will continue to undergo many rigorous "clarifications and decantations."<sup>65</sup> It will also have to maintain an independent and critical stance over against

58. Gutiérrez, "Praxis," p. 134.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*

65. *Ibid.*

"all simplistic political processes that fail to take account of all the dimensions of man."<sup>66</sup> Above all, it will have to grow in such a way "that the voice of Christian popular sectors will be heard in their own terms."<sup>67</sup>

Because of all of this, these new experiments stand "on tricky ground and meet resistance and hostility in all those – Christians or not – who are linked to the old order of things."<sup>68</sup> That is the present situation facing those who have taken the challenge of a new church seriously. "The system has proven its tenacity and capacity to repress or domesticate efforts of renewal. The great weight of resistance appears clearly throughout Christian circles."<sup>69</sup> But, adds Gutiérrez, such a situation is helping us "to live and come to a renewed understanding of what Paul called 'hope against hope.'"<sup>70</sup>

The above account articulates the process of theological clarification that ISAL and other similar avant-guard Christian groups committed to the search for a new church in the historical praxis of faith have gone through in the last several years. But it also raises several critical questions that will need to be dealt with in the not too distant future.

For example, there seems to be implicit in the theological process described above the underlying assumption that Latin Americans have had the message of the gospel announced to them and that it has come to form part of their lives in one way or another.<sup>71</sup> But can this assumption be made without some serious qualifications? Is such an unqualified assumption valid when in fact there are literally millions of Latin Americans who stand explicitly outside the boundaries of the Christian faith and many more who, while being sociologically Christian, have never made a conscientious personal commitment to Jesus Christ?<sup>72</sup>

There is also the question of whether in assuming the implicit faith of the majority of Latin Americans, ISAL (while strongly accentuating a fundamental challenge of the day: the conversion of the

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid.*

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.* p. 136.

71. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

72. On the question of the unevangelized of the Continent, see chapter XIII.

institutional church and those who call themselves Christians but who deny their faith by their continuous participation in the oppression of their fellow human beings) may not be by-passing the imperative of the evangelization of the non-Christian world.

To be sure, ISAL has explicitly committed itself to "the integral liberation of man," which includes not only the political liberation of the peoples of the earth and especially of the socially oppressed sectors of society, and the ongoing historical liberation of human beings through the development of science and technology, whereby they can become the master of their own history, but also their liberation from sin, the ultimate root of all evil, which prepares the way for a life of authentic human fellowship.<sup>73</sup> Heretofore, however, ISAL has placed the accent primarily on the first level (political liberation) and only to a lesser extent on the second (liberation through the ongoing historical process) and third (personal liberation from sin).

This explains why so little has been said in ISAL circles about the problem of unbelief and the evangelistic task, except insofar as these touch upon the functional unbelief of "Christian oppressors" and the institutional church's betrayal of the liberating mission of Christ, which is fundamentally oriented toward the outcasts of society.<sup>74</sup> But this, as fundamental as it is in Latin America and throughout the world, certainly does not exhaust the mission of the Christian faith, not even temporarily as a provisional historical priority. Not to deal with the problem of evangelization beyond the dimension of functional unbelief and praxeological apostasy; to remain silent or to postpone temporarily the personal need that men and women — in Latin America and throughout the world — have for liberation from sin through faith in Christ is, in point of actual fact, to deny the expressed commitment to the integral liberation of humanity. In such a case, the danger of reductionism, which is always present in the life and mission of the church, becomes a reality.

73. Cf. Gutiérrez, *Liberation*, pp. 36-37; also Assmann, "Implicaciones," *Pueblo oprimido*, p. 163.

74. The one notable exception to this is the discussion of Hugo Assmann, "Evangelización y liberación," in his *Opresión-liberación*, especially, p. 156. But even here the accent is on the historical meaning of such evangelistic concepts as conversion and not on the challenge of evangelization in a world in which there are still millions that have yet to have the opportunity of considering the gospel as an option for their lives.

Then, too, it must be asked whether it is the mere "discovery" of the world of the other that leads to a conversion to "the poor Christ" and not the other way around? Is not *metanoia* the *result* of faith in the gospel? And is faith not a gift of God, revealed and appropriated in Christ? But how can it be a gift appropriate in Christ (true, the man for others, the one who hides behind the poor and the weak, but *Jesus Christ*, nonetheless! ) if it is contingent upon a personal deed: "one can only receive the gift of brotherhood by making men brothers."<sup>75</sup> The question is not whether the poor constitute a Christological *locus*, but whether the gift of faith in Christ is appropriated through an act of solidarity with the outcast, or whether discovering and standing alongside the latter is not rather a *sign* of conversion, a seal of the appropriation of the gift of faith in Christ.

#### FROM ÑAÑA, PERU TO SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA

The road from Ñaña to San José (Costa Rica), where ISAL held its last General Assembly in March 1975, has been rough and thorny. It began with an optimistic quest for greater concreteness in the praxis of faith. Not too long thereafter, however, thorns and thistles began to appear on the way. It is now clear that part of the problem lay in the way in which groups like ISAL read the historical situation of Latin America. The road to liberation was longer and more difficult than it was assumed to be; the masses did not — indeed could not — emerge to take their place alongside the vanguard groups; the forces of repression turned out to be much too powerful. The churches, which bear tremendous political power, did not respond, as expected, to the challenge of the hour.

Meanwhile, ISAL has sought to understand the meaning of the gospel in the concrete complexity of the Latin American situation. This has deepened its ecclesiological awareness. On the one hand, it has become clear that a new church is possible only as Christians discover Christ in the poor and the downtrodden; only as the gospel is lived and announced from within a position of identification and solidarity with the exploited majorities; only as new models of Christian community are formed, demonstrating new ways of being present in the world free from the rigidity of institutional

75. Gutiérrez, "Praxis," *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Christianity. On the other hand, the most recent historical events have shown how powerful the institutional church really is and how difficult it is to penetrate into the heart of the masses without an active presence in the pastoral activities of the church. Thus, while there is a radical difference between a church of the people and the established church, the confrontation between the two, if it is to be fruitful, must take place, *not at the institutional but at the praxeological level*, in qualitatively distinctive *paradigmatic* ecclesial action.

The practical implications of this way of thinking for a group like ISAL are obvious: it must reduce its operations to that which is absolutely essential. The need of the hour is not the perpetuation of para-ecclesiastical vanguard organizations, but a deeper involvement of Christians committed to the process of liberation in the regular activities of the church.

ISAL has thus begun to dissolve itself as an organization in order to stimulate a more realistic, concrete and decisive presence in the pastoral activities of the church. In this, we see both a meeting point with CELADEC and a point of difference between the two. Both have seen the importance of the institutional church, the need for a new church and the priority of penetrating the pastoral structures in order to come (religiously) nearer to the majorities. But unlike CELADEC, which has begun to enlarge its programmatic and institutional base while simultaneously accentuating its role as an *avant-garde* type movement, ISAL appears to have rejected all attempts to enlarge itself institutionally or to continue to see itself as a vanguard organization. Instead, it has begun to stress the importance of working with and within the church rather than against it, not because it considers the institutional church any more "holy" now than it was in the past, but because of its reexamination of the historical role of Christianity in Latin America. This has led ISAL to recognize, first, that without "revolutionizing this historical space [the church] there will not be any revolution" in Latin America; and secondly, that "the Church is still one of the less repressed fields of action" in a continent that has entered, perhaps, into one of the most repressive periods in its history.<sup>76</sup>

76. Assmann, "Medellín," *Ibid.*, p. 141.

## CHAPTER X

### THE QUEST FOR AUTHENTIC ECUMENISM

Parallel with the quest for concreteness in mission, the post-III CELA period witnessed a search for an authentic expression of Christian unity. There are several factors accounting for this phenomenon.

One of these is the well-known fact that traditional ecumenical structures in Latin America have been largely imported. Beginning with the continental conferences, which were initiated by the North American missionary boards and societies,<sup>1</sup> and including the Conciliar Movement, which was stimulated and encouraged by the former New York-based Latin American Cooperation Committee (CCLA),<sup>2</sup> and the so-called para-ecclesiastical ecumenical organizations, the

1. As it has been noted, the first of these conferences was the Panama Congress in 1916. The latter was meant to be a Latin American Edinburgh (which did not recognize Latin America as a mission field), but there were only 23 "natives" present. The CCLA, which had been organized in 1913 in response to Edinburgh's lack of concern for Latin America and which had called the Panama Congress, was re-organized thereafter to coordinate the work of the mission boards and societies that were operating in the Continent. That it was a distinctly foreign organization is demonstrated by the fact that it had its headquarters in New York. Cf. Pérez-Rivas, "Ecumenismo," p. 215.

2. The recommendation for the creation of national councils of churches originated at the Christian Work Conference in Montevideo, 1925, which was organized by the CCLA. From 1928 to 1956, there were 12 national councils created throughout Spanish and Portuguese-speaking Latin America. (cf. *Ibid.*, p. 216.) It is obvious, therefore, that from its inception the Latin American Protestant Ecumenical Movement was patterned after its North American progenitor, that it followed the strategy of the world-wide Conciliar Movement, and that it was shaped by the ecclesiological experience and ideological presuppositions of North Atlantic Protestantism. Cf. Goodall, *Ibid.*, pp. 11ff.; José Míguez-Bonino, "Is Fellowship Possible? Extracts from a discussion in the Central Committee," *The Ecumenical Review* XXIV:4 (October 1972), 468; *Idem*, "A Latin American Attempt to Locate the Question of Unity," *Ibid.*, XXVI:2 (April 1974), 217. See also: Stanley W. Rycroft, *The National Councils*

Ecumenical Movement in Latin America has represented, with very few exceptions, a foreign enterprise.<sup>3</sup> The institutions that have embodied it did not rise from the living experience of the Protestant community. They have lacked, therefore, an effective national moral, organizational and financial supporting base.

Beyond this, Mainline Ecumenical nuclei, particularly the national councils, have not dealt with the fundamental problem of ecumenism: the meaning and mission of the faith. In the words of Míguez-Bonino: The majority of the Protestant structures of cooperation have "parenthesized and isolated" the fundamental question of Christian unity, namely, those things that

have to do with the nature and mission of the Church. Consequently, they condemn themselves from the beginning to a marginal position in terms of the life of the Church, for they exclude from their very constitution. . . that which makes up the central understanding of the Gospel and the Church. Accordingly, these forms of collaboration do not provide any answers to the problems of the new religious and social situation with which Latin America confronts the churches. . .<sup>4</sup>

Because the greater part of traditional ecumenical structures have not been responsive to "the signs of the times," they have given rise to a general feeling of dissatisfaction. Latin American ecumenism enters upon a life and death struggle the moment Protestants begin to reflect missiologically.

It is out of the historical challenge of an alienated, oppressed and exploited Continent, on the one hand, and the disappointment over impotent, ahistorical and acritical traditional ecumenical structures, on the other, that a quest for an authentic Latin American expres-

*and Federations of Churches in Latin America* (N.Y.: Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, 1961); John A. MacKay, *Las iglesias latinoamericanas y el movimiento ecuménico* (N.Y.: Comité de Cooperación en América Latina, 1963); and Rhoda Edmeston, *The Protestant Youth Movement in Latin America* (N.Y.: Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, 1964).

3. One exception to this is ULAJE, which grew out of the initiative of Latin American Protestant youth. (Cf. Pérez-Rivas, "Ecumenismo," p. 218f.) Mention must also be made of the rapid process of indigenization which the Cuban Protestant Council has experienced in recent years. (Cf. "XXI Asamblea del CIEC" [alluded to in chapter VI]; and Ernesto Casals, "Statement of Churches Supporting the Revolution in Cuba," taped interview by Ian Fraser, Havana, Cuba, November, 1974.)

4. Míguez-Bonino, *Unidad*, p. 73.

sion of the one faith in Christ has grown among contemporary Protestant Christians. It is a quest, thus, that has risen out of the challenge of mission; that has focused on the missionary praxis of faith; and that has taken the forms of bridge-building, project-screening and reconstruction of the concept of unity.

### ECUMENICAL BRIDGE-BUILDING

It has been noted how the Protestantism of the III CELA was shot through with a critical consciousness of the internal divisions that characterize the Protestant presence in Latin America. Other Protestants have repeatedly expressed deep anxiety not only about intra-Protestant conflicts but especially regarding Protestant-Catholic polemics and the ecumenical challenge of the secular forces of the Continent.<sup>5</sup> It was natural, therefore, for the quest for an authentic ecumenical expression to take the form of bridge-building – internally in relation to the differing Protestant sectors and externally in reference to Catholics and political movements and ideologies.

#### *Bridge-Building Ad Intra: The Case of the Associations of Theological Institutions*

The most obvious example of the first type of ecumenical bridge-building is that of the four Associations of Theological Institutions: AADET (Andean Association of Theological Schools), ALET (Latin American Association of Theological Schools, Northern Region), ASIT (Association of Theological Seminaries and Institutes) and ASTE (Association of Protestant Theological Schools, Brazil). These four entities have had the merit of helping to bring the major theological schools of the Continent into closer relationship with one another. They brought these schools out of their "painful isolation," thereby fashioning a wider frame of reference for the evaluation of the caliber of their cooperative tasks, "creating a reasonable degree of mutual confidence" and even challenging their traditional presuppositions.<sup>6</sup> Insofar as they deal with an important sector of the

5. Cf. De Santa Ana, *Protestantismo*, pp. 140f.; Emilio Castro, "Ecumenismo y comunicación masiva en América Latina," *WACC Journal*, XIX:4 (1972), 16-24 (English translation, pp. 24-32).

6. TEF, "Associations of Theological Institutions in the Third World," Unpublished document Prepared for the TEF Task Force, Bromley, Kent, November 5, 1974 (mimeographed), p. 15.



churches, the future professional leadership, they have contributed to the elimination of traditional roadblocks. Even more significant is the fact that due to the ineffectiveness and insufficiently representational character of the councils of churches, these Associations "have had to find their own ways to relate to the churches." According to a TEF staff report, "these circumstances often mean that the Association is a more effective representative ecumenical body than the Council of Churches in the region or country concerned."<sup>7</sup>

At the continental level, the Associations first revealed their bridge-building vocation at the First Latin American Consultation of Theological Educators, held in São Paulo in August, 1970. Sponsored by the four Associations, the Consultation consisted of 76 participants from 43 seminaries and 16 countries. It was "without doubt . . . the most significant consultation in this field" held theretofore.<sup>8</sup>

The importance of this event lies not just in its theological educational character but also in the fact that it was an ecumenical bridgebuilding exercise of profound missiological significance. The participants were a cross-representation of the Latin American Protestant world. This made possible a broad and frank discussion on fundamental issues affecting the life of the church. The discussion was focused on a question with unmistakable missiological implications: "What does it mean to educate theologically" in Latin America? This question could be very easily formulated in more explicit missiological terms without altering its meaning. For as was verified by the four panels around which the Consultation revolved this question was nothing less than an inquiry regarding the mission of theological education in the contemporary situation of Latin America. Each panel was structured around a single question:

1. What are the educational concepts or philosophies upon which our theological educational task is founded?
2. How does theological education serve the church? Is theological education tuned in to the church, serving only the latter's interest or is it a sign of the fulfillment of the church's mission?
3. What are the criteria whereby the quality of theological education may be judged?

7. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

8. José Míguez-Bonino, ed., "¿Qué significa educar teológicamente?," Consulta de Educadores teológicos, São Paulo, Brasil, 25-28 de agosto de 1970 (Buenos Aires: Secretaría de ASIT, n.d.), (mimeographed), p. 1.

4. What is the relationship between theological education and the historical context in which it takes place?<sup>9</sup>

That the central control of each panel was missiological, may be verified from the following representative statements.

In the first panel, Luis Fidel Mercado proposed the notion of God's mission as the foundation for the theological educational task. "To speak of God's mission in the world is of particular importance for the determination of our starting point," he asserted. He further stated that in his opinion

God's mission in the world is irreversibly linked to the total destiny of Jesus Christ. The God of the Christians is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God who raised [him] from the dead and confirms his works with the proclamation and presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

Accordingly, the primary task of theological education is to help the student discover and explain the depth of God's mission in the world.<sup>11</sup>

In the second panel, Aharon Sapsejian underscored the role of theological education as a servant of the church, but then as a "function of God's mission to men." In his opinion, "mission is, in the last analysis, the normative criterion of that service." Thus he defined theological education as "growth in the understanding of God's mission in the world and the capacity to participate with others in that mission."<sup>12</sup>

Gerson Veiga defended the position, in the third panel, that "theological education needs to be judged in the light of its final goal: to help the student of theology to grow in his commitment to God's mission in Christ." This, he said, was the fundamental criterion for evaluating the quality of theological education.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, Osvaldo Luis Mottesi sought to analyze the meaning of theological education in the historical context of Latin America, in his contribution as a member of the fourth panel. Such an analysis,

9. Pedro Sávega, "La temática de la consulta," p. 3.

10. Luis Fidel Mercado, "Una Perspectiva Teológica da Missão de Deus," *Simposio*, No. 6 (Junho de 1971), 13.

11. Cf. Pedro Sávega, "Los conceptos o filosofías de educación que fundamenta nuestra tarea," *Consulta*, p. 6.

12. Aharon Sapsejian, "Como Pode e Educação Teológica Melhor Servir a Igreja?," *Simposio*, pp. 63, 64.

13. Gerson Veiga, "Criterios para ser Julgar a Educação Teológica," *Ibid.*, p. 48.

he said, has profound implications for the life and mission of the church. In the present historical moment theological education must be conceived of "as the servant that it ought to be of the renewal" of the church. He further stated:

In this hour in which our Brown America cries out for its liberation, the challenge to theological education is that it become a liberating education. An education that [will form] servants of Jesus Christ for the liberation of the Latin American . . . world. Priests and prophets with the mentality of the 21st century for the Continent of the future.<sup>14</sup>

It is precisely in Mottesi's exposition that we note the ecumenical implications of the Consultation's missiological thrust. For if theological education is to be seen in the perspective of God's mission in the historical context of contemporary Latin America, it must be characterized by "a growing and effective program of cooperation, through a genuine ecumenical witness. . . The atomization of theological education by the constant proliferation of institutions is an ecclesiastical scandal that gives evidence of our divisions."<sup>15</sup>

These are very prophetic words, the more so when one considers their source, namely, an Evangelical representing the Latin American Biblical Seminary and known around the Continent for his gift as a dynamic evangelistic preacher.

The ecumenical value of the First Latin American Consultation of Theological Educators lay in its success in bringing together a representative number of theological educators from different sectors of the Protestant world and thereby creating the possibility for them to discover and experience that theological education in Latin America must be a joint attempt to strengthen the church's participation in God's mission in the tumultuous crossroads of a convulsed society.

The greatest bridge-building contribution that the Associations have been able to make within the divided Protestant community, however, has taken place in their own respective areas. It is in relation to their own constituencies that we can best appreciate their unique ecumenical role.

The oldest Association is ASTE. Founded in 1961, it operates in a country where there are approximately 80 Protestant institutions, 25 of which are part of its constituency. It has enjoyed stability and the

14. Osvaldo Luis Mottesi, "Educación teológica y coyuntura histórica," *En Marcha! Internacional*, No. 18 (1971), p. 11.

15. *Ibid.*

confidence of churches from different theological traditions. But it has not been exempt from the theological controversies that Mainline Protestant conservative churches have experienced in the last several years. In recent years, it has come under attack for being too open theologically. The greatest reaction has come from the National Presbyterians, whose Campinas seminary, a charter member of ASTE and up to a few years ago one of the most prestigious schools in all of Latin America, withdrew its membership. Paradoxically, however, ASTE received into its membership, at about the same time, the largest Protestant seminary in the Continent, the Theological Faculty of the Pentecostal Federation of Brazil. This news was conveyed to the general public by a National interchurch bulletin in a rather telling manner: "Presbyterians Leave and Pentecostals Enter the Association of Theological Schools."<sup>16</sup> The obvious implication is that while a conservative Mainline group considers ASTE's openness unacceptable, the Pentecostals welcome it!

ASTE's close neighbor, AADEP, has been confronted with increasing difficulties in the last two years and has had to call a temporary halt to its activities on account of the sudden departure from the area of its key leaders. Nevertheless, during its active years it helped to bring leaders from traditionally separatist Evangelical schools and organizations and non-Evangelical Mainliners of the area into fruitful contact with each other. This bridge, however -- as significant as it was -- turned out to be not sufficiently strong to bear this two-way traffic.<sup>17</sup>

The southernmost Association, ASIT, has been instrumental in the creation of a frank and open dialogue between Evangelical and Mainline institutions of conservative and more radical persuasions. In its bulletin there are frequent contributions from all ranges of the theological spectrum. Its leadership is made up of a broad representation of varying theological positions. Especially significant have been ASIT's annual assemblies where theological issues have been hotly debated.<sup>18</sup>

16. Cf. "Presbiterianos Saem e Penetecostals Entram Nas Associação dos Seminarios," CIEI, No. 71 (Octubro 1972), 6.

17. Cf. Aharon Sapsejian, Private (telephone) interview, Amsterdam, Netherlands and London, England, May 23, 1975.

18. Cf. José Míguez-Bonino, "Décima asamblea de ASIT: Imágenes del pastor," ASIT, IV:12 (mayo 1972), 1-2; *Idem*, "El conflicto de las ideologías: Preparando la próxima asamblea de ASIT," *Ibid.*, V:14 (febrero 1974), 1-2.

But the Association that has been engaged in by far the greatest amount of ecumenical bridge-building is ALET. Indeed, the bridges that it has built have turned out to be sufficiently strong and broad to bear a great deal of traffic from both directions. This is vividly illustrated in the following statement:

ALET will continue to be an Association in which all sorts of thought will flow with freedom in order to enrich the experience of all. ALET is a fraternal Christian community that confirms the reconciliation that has been given to us in Jesus Christ. Any [educational] methodology, be it of extension, of residence, of conscientization, will be considered as enriching for all the members of this community. Any theological interpretation, any new approach, any serious opinion will be seriously heard and considered. ALET has come to such a maturity that it can say, with the English preacher, 'we think and let think.'<sup>19</sup>

These are very significant words coming from an organization that has been threatened on several occasions with divisive waves.<sup>20</sup> In fact, they are part of the Report of a gathering that was expected to be very heated and controversial. Seven months before this meeting the situation had looked rather gloomy. A regional consultation sponsored by ALET for representatives of theological schools in the Spanish Caribbean and the Greater Colombian countries (Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador) had sparked a lot of controversy among several Evangelical institutions. The situation was mildly described, with unintentional irony, by Jacinto Ordoñez, ALET's Executive Secretary, when he stated in his report that

One of the leaders of theological education in Latin America who was present, a professor in one of the seminaries of recognized orthodoxy and a representative of conservative thought, wrote to ALET's Executive Secretariat: 'I believe that all of us were shaken and stimulated to think, and no doubt we profited something.'<sup>21</sup>

19. Jacinto Ordoñez, "La VII asamblea de ALET," *Boletín de ALET*, IV:4, 5 (noviembre-diciembre 1972; enero-febrero 1973), 20.

20. In 1966, especially, the Evangelical forces threatened to form another Association. Cf. "CAEMO Consultation" (Committee to Assist Missionary Education Overseas), Cartagena, Colombia, January 29-30, 1967 (mimeographed); [Plutarco Bonilla], "Editorial," *A.L.I.B.T. Boletín publicado por la secretaría ejecutiva*, 1:2 (Septiembre 1966), 1.

21. Jacinto Ordoñez, "Conclusiones de la Consulta sobre educación teológica, Las Caracas, Venezuela, 22-26 de mayo 1972," *Boletín de ALET*, IV:1, 2 (Mayo-Agosto 1972), 2.

Shortly after this consultation, I visited one of the large Evangelical seminaries in the region to deliver a series of lectures and discovered a disturbed environment there. In the opinion of one of the faculty members, himself a member of ALET's Board, the reaction of many of the Evangelicals present at the consultation was very negative. As a result, some of the member schools, including his own were seriously considering dissociating themselves from ALET.

At the VII General Assembly of ALET, held in Cuernavaca, Mexico on 26-27 January 1973, however, a totally different atmosphere was evidenced. According to the delegates from the Latin American Biblical Seminary, the Assembly was characterized by a tremendous amount of respect and tolerance.<sup>22</sup>

Around the same time that ALET was holding its annual meeting, a new theological educational association geared toward TEE was organized. Given the largely Evangelical composition of ALISTE (Latin American Association of Theological Seminaries and Institutes by Extension), it was thought that perhaps it might become a rival organization alongside ALET. The latter, however, sought to enter into dialogue with ALISTE on common problems. These conversations, held in 1973 and 1974, resulted in the following agreement: ALET and ALISTE would hold their following general assemblies together from June 1 - 8, 1975 in Costa Rica. They further agreed to hold, in conjunction with their assemblies, a joint consultation on the "Reality and Future of Theological Education in the Northern Region of Latin America."<sup>23</sup>

The joint Costa Rica meetings did not bring the two organizations any closer to each other structurally. But the fact that they were held did open up the possibility for better coordination of theological education programs. This is verified by ALISTE's increasing participation in continent-wide theological education activities. Thus, for example, ALISTE has become a co-sponsor, along with ALET, ASTE and ASIT, of the Second Latin American Consultation of Theological Educators, planned for July, 1976. Likewise, its General Coordinator is serving, along with the secretaries of the other associa-

22. Cf. Ruben Lores and Guidoberto Mahecha, Oral report given at an assembly of the Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano, March 1973, San José, Costa Rica.

23. [Jacinto Ordoñez], "Editorial," *Boletín de ALET*, VI:2-3 (Julio-Octubre, 1974), 2, 20.

tions, in a new committee of the TEF created to screen projects dealing with "alternative patterns of theological education in Latin America."

These developments underscore the bridge-building role of the Association of Theological Institutions. Indeed rather than feeling threatened by the emergence of a more conservative association like ALISTE -- which has a continent-wide constituency -- the other associations have sought to enlist ALISTE in their joint endeavors.<sup>24</sup> And in the measure that they continue to go the second mile in searching for solutions to the common problems facing Latin American Protestants and for new avenues of service through new forms of theological education, the Associations will not only continue to make possible a greater cooperation among the institutions whose task it is to train the future leaders of the churches, but even more importantly, they will be laying the foundation for a greater cooperation among the churches themselves.

### *Bridge-Building Ad Extra: The Case of ISAL and ULAJE*

The second type of ecumenical bridge-building witnessed in Latin American Protestantism in the post-III CELA period is that which has sought to move beyond the circle of an intra-Protestant ecumenism and establish an ecumenical alliance with Catholics and non-believers. We shall have to come back to this ecumenical approach and analyze its basic premises in another section of this chapter. For the moment, it will suffice to examine its manifestations in ISAL and ULAJE.

It has already been noted how ISAL had developed from an ecumenical board of the Protestant churches in the early 60's into a supraconfessional organization in the latter part of the decade. Such was the ecumenical transformation of its constituency that after Naña the staff positions of its continental secretariats were equally divided between Catholics and Protestants, and all of its national affiliated groups were supraconfessional. Its official Protestant identity was maintained only for reasons of assuring continued

24. The TEF deserves, of course, credit for encouraging such bridge-building efforts and cooperation. Indeed the latter have been largely due to the quiet mediating role which the TEF has been able to play, especially between the officers of ALISTE and ALET.

financial support from the major Protestant ecumenical agencies in Europe and North America. And its connection with the Catholic church as such was nonexistent. Its relationship was only with Catholic individuals, the majority of whom belonged to nonconfessional avant-guard Christian groups. In this respect, the bridge to the Non-Protestant world was extended at a non-ecclesiastical level. It was at this same level that ISAL built a bridge to the non-Christian political (revolutionary) world. Though practically all of its members belonged to various leftist political parties, ISAL as such never associated itself with a specific party.

Yet, as was already noted in chapter VIII, in the last two years ISAL has been engaged in a considerable reassessment of its bridge-building activity. It has lamented its failure to build an effective bridge to the Catholic (and, implicitly, the Protestant) hierarchy. Beyond this, it has emphasized the fundamental importance of building stronger ties with the pastoral structures of the church. This all goes to show the importance of the Latin American ecclesiastical institution for any ecumenical alliance.

Nevertheless, Protestantism owes to ISAL the awareness as to where the real ecumenical challenge lies: not just in intra-Protestant fellowship but on the missionary frontiers of the Continent. As ISAL's former General Secretary, Julio De Santa Ana, has put it: The missionary challenge of Latin America is such that to continue to duplicate efforts and follow the pattern of the competitive enterprise is to militate against the effectiveness of the Christian witness. This means that Protestants and Catholics must increasingly seek ways to witness jointly to their common faith. "The frankness with which the problem is dealt with will speak of the degree to which the Ecumenical Movement is incarnated in Latin American life," he says.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the challenge of mission forces the church to raise the question regarding the end-goal of ecumenism: Is it to promote "service to the churches as institutions and confessions, or is it rather [to promote] . . . service to humanity. . .?"<sup>26</sup> It is in making the Protestant community conscious of the larger dimension of the ecumenical quest that ISAL has made its greatest contribution to the Ecumenical Movement.

25. De Santa Ana, *Protestantismo*, p. 140.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 141. See also Emilio Castro, "Prólogo," *De la iglesia*, p. iii.



A second example of bridge-building *ad extra* is to be found in the activities of the oldest ecumenical organization of the Latin American continent: ULAJE. On April 27th, 1970, at its Sixth General Assembly in Montevideo, ULAJE decided to change its name to Latin American Union of *Ecumenical* (instead of Protestant) Youth. Why the change? In ULAJE's own words: "The very reality of the organization moved [its constituency] to adopt [a] . . . new name! " It describes itself as "a movement of young people who are living in diaspora, engaged in the process of the liberation of human beings. . ." It is a "movement [that] wishes to be an ecumenical community trying faithfully to bear witness to a common faith and hope in one Lord."<sup>27</sup>

In practical terms, this means that ULAJE no longer exists at the level of churches. This was clearly verified during the Montevideo Assembly where the majority of the groups represented had no connection with ecclesiastical structures.<sup>28</sup> ULAJE's constituency is made up of grassroots youth groups whose members are often "living in the fringe of society because of their opinions or actions."<sup>29</sup>

ULAJE presents, therefore, a similar situation to that of ISAL, but then at the level of the youth. While it *calls* itself an "inter-confessional organization," the distinguishing trait of its ecumenical character is its *non*-confessional religious makeup. ULAJE's ecumenism is one of praxis, of youth committed to a process of "radical change" in "the economic, political, social-cultural and religious structures. . ."<sup>30</sup> It is no surprise, then, that it defines the type of ecumenical community with which it wishes to identify as one made up of "groups of people who were separated before by political, ideological and religious barriers and are now joining with one another in thought and action for the liberation of the human being."<sup>31</sup> ULAJE represents, therefore, an ecumenical praxis which is "not limited to religious and institutional ecumenism," but transcends it in the service of the world.<sup>32</sup> ULAJE has yet to show

27. ULAJE, "Brief Records, *Raison D'Etre*," Córdova, n.d. (mimeographed), p. 1, 2.

28. Cf. Osvaldo Hirschmann, "Encuentro de secretarios ecuménicos," ULAJE *comparte información documentación*, No. 6 (Diciembre, 1971), 5.

29. ULAJE, "*Raison D'Etre*," p. 2.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

32. *Ibid.*

whether it has truly made room for ecclesiastical institutions or whether it has discarded them altogether. In its formal declarations, it has denied the latter.<sup>33</sup> In its praxis it has tended to affirm it. It remains for ULAJE to prove concretely that it has not become totally absorbed by the secular dimension of ecumenism, that it still maintains a religious perspective, that in fact it is still a Christian ecumenical organization and not just another avant-garde group.

*Bridge-Building in Both Directions: The Case of CELADEC and UNELAM*

In the case of CELADEC and UNELAM, bridge-building efforts in both directions can be detected. We have already noted the importance that the former has attached to the task of building strong bridges to the various ecclesiastical sectors of Protestantism. CELADEC has attempted to relate to the total Protestant community through the promotion of the NLCC among different types of churches, the recent incorporation into its staff of several young Latin American leaders closely related with Evangelical churches and organizations, and the maintenance of informal ties with several organizations traditionally associated with the Evangelical world and other Protestant ecumenical bodies.

CELADEC has also sought to maintain links with socio-political grass-roots movements. It has begun to cooperate with popular educational efforts and projects. In each of its immersion experiences it has sought to incorporate the vision and perspective of those who stand outside the frontiers of the church. And at its last Assembly it had an official representative from the Latin American Conference of Workers.

In terms of the Catholic church CELADEC has maintained fraternal links with CELAM's Department of Education (DEC). DEC's Executive Secretary has a permanent observer status at the meetings of CELADEC's Board, and the latter's General Secretary has been given the same privilege at DEC's meetings. CELADEC carries out its publication program in cooperation with a Catholic publishing company (Editorial Búsqueda). Most recently, it appointed a Catholic expert in the field of education to serve on its staff.

33. For example, ULAJE continues to see itself as part of "the Ecumenical Protestant Movement." Cf. Hirschmann, "Encuentro," p. 5.

Equally significant, though perhaps less conspicuous, have been the efforts of UNELAM to build bridges between the different sectors of Protestantism as well as between Catholics and Protestants. In this context, a project to stimulate and promote the study of "responsible ecumenism in Latin America" merits mention.<sup>34</sup> Two seminars for "ecumenical promoters" have been announced for August and September, 1975 in Guatemala and Bolivia respectively. The purpose of these seminars is to orient church leaders on "problems related to Christian unity in the Latin American context."<sup>35</sup>

As for the permanent bridge to the various Protestant sectors, it has been noted how UNELAM has tried to establish closer relations with Pentecostals. Ever since its Puerto Rico Assembly, it has increasingly incorporated the Pentecostal presence into its life and ministry. One of the members of its Board is a Pentecostal; another is actively involved in the activities of the Secretariat of Communication. In 1972 it received into membership Chile's largest Pentecostal body, the Methodist Pentecostal Church. In spite of the difficulties it has encountered along the way, it has given top priority to its Pentecostal Project (the sponsoring of a continental Pentecostal congress), assigning its coordination to the head of another Pentecostal member church (the Argentine Pentecostal Church of God).

The bridge to the Evangelicals has been less effective, but nevertheless meaningful. Beginning with the III CELA and including the 1972 request extended to the Latin American Biblical Seminary to coordinate the Central American conference, to the Andean Protestant Conference, held in Lima in August 1974, and the September 1974 Caracas Caribbean Consultation on Missionary Personnel, UNELAM has sought to involve the Evangelical forces of the Continent in its various programs and activities. Heretofore, however, very few, if any, of the main Evangelical groups have established official relations with UNELAM.

UNELAM has tried to build official links with the Catholic world. But here the situation is a bit more difficult, for as Emilio Castro has pointed out, the Catholic counterpart of UNELAM is CELAM, which "is an official body, practically, of one united church. . ." UNELAM

34. UNELAM, *Preguntas*, p. 23.

35. "Celebrarán seminarios para promotores ecuménicos," *Rápidas* 1:40 (Junio de 1975), 6.

is, in turn, a sort of free association of church federations and some single churches, which do not pretend in any way to incorporate even the majority of Latin American Protestantism. "In consequence," Castro maintains, "there cannot be . . . a one to one relation; and [UNELAM] understands that, in large measure, the initiative in ecumenical relations would correspond to CELAM."<sup>36</sup>

Even so, UNELAM has taken several ecumenical initiatives in terms of the Catholic Church. One of the most important of these is the permanent invitation to Catholic organizations to send fraternal delegates or observers to its many gatherings and meetings. In some cases, such as the Asunción Consultation on Mission to the Indians, nearly one half of the total number of participants were from Catholic missionary organizations. Beyond this, it has sought to foster joint Catholic-Protestant activities, such as a "*Christian Youth Encounter*" of the "southern cone" countries and a continental "*Christian Conference on Development*."<sup>37</sup>

In relation to the challenge of "ecumenism with the world" UNELAM has designed two important projects, one on the "political role of the church," the other on "nonviolent" social change. The first is an attempt to promote socio-theological discussions among the churches on the political implications of their status as social institutions. But with the departure from Latin America in the middle of 1974 of the staff member in charge of this project (Karl Neisel), it looks as if it may have come to a standstill. The second project is a continuous effort to "back-up and diffuse information on all the experiments that are being conducted in the field of nonviolent methodology for . . . social change in Latin America. . ."<sup>38</sup> Heretofore, however, UNELAM has made available to the general public (and so far as is known to this writer, to its own constituency) very little, if any, material.

More significant has been the individual efforts of two of its staff members. In Uruguay, Emilio Castro tried to serve as a bridge of reconciliation between the government authorities and the Tupamaro guerrillas, running the risk thereby of being heavily criticized by both

36. Emilio Castro, "Al sur de la *oikoumene*," *Vispera*, 7:30 (Febrero, 1973), 11, 12.

37. *Idem*, Circular Letter to Friends of UNELAM, December 1971 (mimeographed), pp. 2, 3.

38. UNELAM, *Preguntas*, p. 25.

sides. In Chile, Augusto Fernandez Arlt became an important instrument in the formation of a Refugee Committee to help the numerous people who, in fear of their lives, were seeking political asylum in the aftermath of the 1973 *coup d'état*. But when all is said and done, the fact remains that UNELAM's ecumenical bridge-building efforts have been primarily oriented to the ecclesiastical world. This was confirmed by Castro when he was still functioning as UNELAM's General Secretary:

We undertake ecumenism at the church level, serving as contact point, of reciprocal criticism, as analytic mirror of their own situation, permanently searching [for] incarnation in the Latin American reality. . . . We are sure that our contribution as [an] ecumenical agency . . . to the process of liberation and national consolidation of the continent is going through the search for a renewed church, of a community which discovers its vocation in its land. Others can perform the secular tasks, only those who have received the call to this vocation of the Christian Ministry can contribute to the process of common liberation through the contribution [from the wealth] of the Christian tradition and of the lives of the Christians who are today congregated in the churches of the continent.<sup>39</sup>

The task of building ecumenical bridges between the various Protestant sectors, between Protestants and Catholics and between Christians and the secular forces of the Continent is but one form which the ecumenical quest for authenticity has taken within Mainline churches and related groups. It has not been without its ambiguities, to be sure. But the significance of these initiatives as unique ecumenical occurrences cannot be denied. Indeed, they bring out the complex reality of a common Christian faith whose concrete visible manifestations are always partial, but which is constantly pushing the Christian community to ever more precise and efficacious expressions of its unity in Christ and, through and because of him, its deep involvement in history and with the entire cosmos. At the same time, they underscore the fact that the ecumenical road is by no means an easy one and that Latin American ecumenism cannot be patterned after any existing form, no matter how successful and unique that form might be. In the words of Antonio Machado: "*caminante no hay camino, el camino se hace al andar*."<sup>40</sup>

39. Castro, Letter to Friends, pp. 1,4.

40. From his *Proverbios y cantares*. A literal translation of these words would be "traveler there is no path, the path is made as you walk."

## ECUMENICAL PROJECT-SCREENING

The quest for authentic ecumenism is further manifested in the search for a more adequate system of assessing existing and future interchurch aid projects. This search did not appear spontaneously. It was sparked by a decision of the WCC's Commission for Inter-Church Aid, Refugees and World Service (CICARWS) to transfer to the various regions the power to establish the criteria for interchurch aid projects and to make the actual decisions on concrete projects.<sup>41</sup> The implementations of this decision became a particular burden in the case of Latin America since there was no sufficiently representative body to which the responsibility could be delegated. In these circumstances, CICARWS' Latin American Desk (LAD) opted for calling a continental consultation to deal with the problem.

*Guadalupe 1972*

The latter was convened on August 29, 1972 on the Caribbean island of Guadalupe. Though sponsored by CICARWS, it was coordinated by CEPAE (Ecumenical Planning and Action Center), a Dominican Republic organization closely related to Continental ISAL. The meeting had three objectives: (1) To revise the financial policy of existing ecumenical projects in Latin America; (2) to define a new policy and system for interchurch aid in Latin America; and (3) to elect a Latin American project-screening committee to evaluate and approve projects that were being or were expected to be financed through CICARWS.<sup>42</sup>

The Consultation got off to a wrong start in the way in which the participants appear to have been chosen. Though it was obvious that the LAD/CICARWS wanted a wide ecumenical representation, it

41. But let there be no misunderstanding; CICARWS' decision was not imperialistic because it was itself precipitated by at least two very influential Latin Americans: Edmundo Desueza, who was a member of CICARWS, and João P. da Silva, Secretary for Latin America. Their views on the problem of interchurch aid were clearly expressed in the Oaxtepec, Mexico Consultation on the Role of the Mission in Latin America (and that took place before da Silva joined CICARWS). Cf. João P. da Silva, "The Participation of the Church in Latin America," pp. 14 ff.; Edmundo Desueza, "Missionary Personnel: For What? ", pp. 21ff., in *Oaxtepec Consultation, Latin American Newsletter*.

42. Ana Cecilia Jimenez, "Reunión patrocinada por CICARWS, Guadalupe 29-31 de agosto - 1 de setiembre de 1972," *ULAJE comparte información, documentación* (Octubre, 1972), 2.

bypassed the existing organizations and apparently invited, on an individual basis, those members of their staff or boards whom it considered most suitable. This seems to be the opinion of at least one of the participants,<sup>43</sup> a view closely related to my own impression after participating with representatives from the various Latin American organizations (the majority of whom were present at Guadalupe) in a discussion with North American Mainline mission board executives in December 1972. It can be further demonstrated by the dissatisfaction which the Latin American member churches of the WCC have voiced regarding the process initiated at Guadalupe, as will be pointed out later.

The Consultation produced a report with a special section on the philosophy of and criteria for the analysis of projects. The Report stated that interchurch aid projects must be understood as expressions of the "events-process" which constitute the Christian witness "in the light of the urgencies" of historical reality and the Christian faith. This means that projects must be judged from the perspective of whether or not they represent attempts to open the way "towards liberation" through their message and objectives. It adds that "the process which correlates needs and aid must be developed in such a way that it permits all people to discover the great challenge and calling of the present era."<sup>44</sup>

According to the Report, three conclusions may be drawn from the Latin American reality in any attempt to concretize the search for analytical criteria for interchurch aid projects. First, Latin American society needs "a total change" especially in relation to "the structure of power and class." Secondly, it needs "an integral development — of wealth and technology, of a new man and a new society — with models and patterns born from within the social reality of Latin America itself." Thirdly, this change and integral development cannot be achieved without "mass participation," which means the presence of "a critical consciousness and organization," the "elaboration of a strategy developed within the context of specific local conditions" and the "unity of and alliance with all sectors struggling for change."<sup>45</sup>

43. Neisel, Personal Interview.

44. Comité Ecuménico Latinoamericano, "Philosophy and Criteria for Projects," *The Guadalupe Report* (1972), (Photocopy), p. 1.

45. *Ibid.*

On the basis of these conclusions, the Report set forth two fundamental ideas: (1) Projects must "emerge from an ecumenical base" and (2) they "should contain the characteristic of witness, which can accelerate criticism within churches and religious groups with respect to their mission and commitment to society."<sup>46</sup> Whatever else was said at Guadalupe these two concepts became the *raison d'être* of the Latin American Ecumenical Committee and Screening Group (CELA). The Committee "is constituted for the maximum of the Latin American reality," say the minutes of the Consultation. It will "try to create the mechanisms which will permit it to obtain the widest possible representation of the Continent."<sup>47</sup> To enhance the fulfillment of its task, it was subdivided in correspondence to six broad areas: (1) economics, politics and development; (2) human and pastoral rights; (3) education and training; (4) research; (5) popular mobilization; and (6) theology. Each member of the Committee was to represent one of these areas.

### *Beyond Guadalupe*

Thus constituted, CELA set to work under the chairmanship of Federico Pagura. One of the first things it did is present its Report "to church bodies active in Latin America as a guideline for the future..."<sup>48</sup> Copies of the Report and the Minutes were sent to various Interchurch Aid agencies and mission boards in Europe and North America. But the Report's militant and polemic tone<sup>49</sup> plus the ill-feeling that was left among ecclesiastical bodies on account of the way the Committee came into existence contributed to a distinct lack of enthusiasm for CELA. Indeed, it appears that for all practical purposes the Guadalupe statement was ignored by Protestant church-

46. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

47. *Idem*, Minutes of the Plenary Meeting in Guadalupe, Thursday, 31st August 1972, trans. by the LAD of CICARWS (Photocopy), p. 1.

48. "Where Does Your Money Go? Funding for Justice," *World Update: Latin America* (1973), p. 9.

49. Cf., for example, the following statement taken from the report of one of the participants: "In its task of the distribution of resources, the Committee will have a three-fold responsibility: 1) Evaluation and approval of projects; 2) the *blocking* of projects that do not correspond to the Committee's policy; 3) *denunciation* of the Agencies that do not respect the Committee's established policy." Jimenez, "Reunión," ULAJE, p. 2. Italics are mine.



es inside and outside of Latin America, as had been feared by some of its North American supporters.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, CELA held its first official meeting in Barbados in May 1973. Its task, then, was that of screening projects submitted to it by LAD/CICARWS.

A year later, at its second meeting in Lima, the CELA lost two of its members and a third was reported to have been absent from all the meetings held up to that time.<sup>51</sup> At the prompting of CICARWS, the process of replacement was placed firmly in the hands of the ecumenical organizations *and* churches. In a direct reference to its power, responsibilities and limitations, the following was reported:

the CELA is sincerely desirous of making a contribution to the Latin American *ecumenical* unity and proposes to search for ways of contributing. We know that the task is complicated and very difficult, and that the CELA has very limited resources at its disposal.<sup>52</sup>

Several months later, in October 1974, a consultation of leaders from the WCC member churches in Latin America was held in Buenos Aires. It was preceded by an encounter between church leaders and representatives of para-ecclesiastical organizations. The church leaders shared several concerns. First, they expressed their dissatisfaction with the fact that they did not have official representation in CELA and insisted on having a direct voice in its deliberations. Secondly, they communicated their dissatisfaction with the WCC for fomenting division in Latin America through the stimulation and support of para-ecclesiastical organizations. (Prior to the meeting some of these church leaders had also strongly criticized the criteria used by the WCC in selecting American personnel in Geneva.<sup>53</sup>) While recognizing that "some para-ecclesiastical groups" have made important contributions "to the life and mission of the church," they expressed concern over the "lack of clarity" among these groups "regarding their relation with the churches." They insisted, accordingly, in receiving "more information on the exist-

50. Cf. "Funding for Justice," above.

51. CELA, "Informe de la segunda reunión del Comité Ecueménico Latinoamericano (Latin American Ecumenical Screening Group)," (26-31 de mayo de 1974), (Photocopy), p.3.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 6. *Italics mine.*

53. Cf. CEI, "Conselho Mundial de Igrejas Quer Manter Dialogo com Líderes de Igrejas Latinoamericanas," CEI, No. 94 (setembro de 1974), 3.

ence and function of these groups," on "more communication [between them and] the churches" and on a greater commitment to the life of some particular church on the part of those who make up their membership.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, representatives from para-ecclesiastical organizations criticized the limited ecumenical perspective, the conservative political stance and the heavy institutional baggage of some of the churches.<sup>55</sup>

As a result of this meeting, two new members, backed by the churches related to the WCC, were incorporated into the CELA. Its name was changed to Latin American Protestant Projects Commission (CELAP). With these modifications, the process that began at Guadalupe finally received the endorsement of at least the WCC member churches in Latin America. And since the latter are also directly or indirectly members of UNELAM, and the two new members of CELAP are members of UNELAM's Board, it follows that CELAP will now enjoy the full backing of UNELAM.<sup>56</sup>

The ecumenical potential of the new commission is everywhere evident. On the one hand, there is at last a truly representative structure from all the major areas of Mainline Protestantism. On the other hand, this move would seem to indicate the depth of the Lima commitment to search for a positive contribution to "Latin American *ecumenical* unity."<sup>57</sup> A next significant step (or leap? ) forward would be reception of the blessing of the IV CELA.

#### *Northeastern Brazil: the Emergence of CESE*

Almost overlapping with the Guadalupe Consultation, a meeting was convened in Salvador, Bahía, Brazil by LAD/CICARWS in collaboration with the four member churches of the WCC in Brazil (Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopal and Pentecostal "Brazil for Christ") and with the official representation of the CNBB (National Conference of Brazilian Bishops). Held from July 31 to August 3, 1972, the Meeting had been postponed from an earlier date and transferred from its originally planned location in Recife on account of strong

54. CEI, "Piden mayor información sobre grupos para-eclésiásticos," *Información ecuménica* (15 de diciembre de 1974), 5.

55. Cf. *Ibid.* See also Reinoso, "A propósito de liberación y unidad," *passim*.

56. Letter from Emilio Castro, December 23, 1974.

57. Italics mine.

disagreements between the local sponsoring body, the LAD and the representative of the WCC-related churches.<sup>58</sup>

As in the case of Guadalupe, this meeting was motivated by the need to create adequate channels for effective evaluation of inter-church aid projects being financed by the WCC and its member churches.<sup>59</sup>

But whereas Guadalupe had a continental focus, the Salvador Consultation was geared toward the particular problems of Northeastern Brazil. For this reason, it was considered best to engage in

a fresh and open debate . . . with technical undergirding, a profound theological perspective and a wide ecumenical participation . . . on the problem of the Northeast [of Brazil, the neediest region], the possibilities for church action and the meaning of its concrete action projects, primarily those related with interchurch aid.<sup>60</sup>

As a result, it was recommended by the participants that the Brazilian churches affiliated with the WCC form "a commission on the Northeast, at the ecumenical level, including the CNBB, for the elaboration of present and future projects in the country."<sup>61</sup> It is clear from some of the documents available that this particular outcome of the Consultation was not expected by some of the representatives from ecumenical Interchurch Aid Agencies and that in their view the real issue for which the Consultation had been

58. Cf. R. Wieland, Memorandum to A. Brash on North East Consultation, 1 February 1972; João P. D. da Silva, *et al.*, Letter to the Preparatory Commission of the North and Northeast Consultation (Fraternal Team), São Paulo, 3rd February 1972, trans. from the Portuguese original by LAD/CICARWS; J. P. D. da Silva, Memorandum to G. Johnson on Northeast Consultation – Brazil 1972, 2nd March 1972; *Idem*, Circular letter on Northeast Consultation, Recife, Brazil, April, 1972; Emilson Rocha Souza, Letter to Missionario Manuel de Mello, 22 May 1972, original with translation from the Portuguese by LAD/CICARWS; J. P. D. da Silva, Memorandum to Missionario Manuel de Mello, *et al.*, re. Consultation-Encounter on Northeast-North Brazil, trans. from the Portuguese original by LAD/CICARWS, 23 May 1972; Emilson Rocha Souza, Letter to João P. D. da Silva, 4 May 1972; *Idem*, 10 May 1972; Emilson Rocha Souza, Letter to Missionario Manuel de Mello, 22 May 1972.

59. Cf. Alan Brash, Cable to Annie Went, 10 January 1972.

60. CEI, "Ayuda Inter-Eclesiástica no Brasil: Encontro Ecuménico de Salvador," CEI *Documento*, No. 70 (setembro de 1970), p. 2.

61. "Documento oficial: Colaboração Projectos de Ação Social," *Ibid.*, p. 3.

called was not really dealt with in depth. One agency executive commented in his report that

Although Inter-Church Aid was touched upon several times, the discussion was less than perfunctory. The same is true for the problem of the Brazilian Churches or institutions. Priorities and criteria of social action have been widely neglected as well.<sup>62</sup>

The head of CICARWS did not express the view of his Commission until almost four months later. His reason for the slow reaction was that CICARWS wanted "to have the *complete* support of the local Churches of Brazil, and not only of the group convening the Consultation."<sup>63</sup>

Be that as it may, eleven months later, on June 13, 1973, the *Coordenadoria Ecolúmenica de Serviço* (Ecumenical Service Commission – CESE) was created, with three of the member churches of the WCC (Episcopal, Methodist and Pentecostal "Brazil for Christ" – the Lutherans chose not to join), the Central Presbyterian Mission of Brazil and the CNBB as charter members. Thus emerged one of the most significant ecumenical efforts in the contemporary history of Brazilian Christianity.

It is obvious that CESE emerged out of a concrete missiological problem:<sup>64</sup> the need for joint action by the churches in order that they might be able to respond adequately to the social challenge of the most marginalized geographical sector of Brazil. But it is also clear that CESE was, from the outset, an ecumenical achievement of immense significance with enormous implications for the future.

Its first task was the compilation and distribution of a pamphlet entitled: "*Declaração Universal dos Direitos Humanos*" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Brazil had signed the original document in 1948, to commemorate its 25th anniversary). CESE's

62. Klaus Poser, "Report on the Northeast Consultation, 31st July to 4th August 1972, in Salvador (Bahía) Brazil," (Bonn, August 11, 1972), (Photocopy), p. 2.

63. Alan A. Brash, Memorandum to Lloyd W. Strachan, *et al.*, Ref.: Brazil-Consultation in Salvador (BA), 28th November 1972. Italics mine.

64. Cf. LAD, CICARWS, "Tentative Proposal for Agenda of the Encounter-Consultation on the Inter-Church Aid System in the North East of Brazil," Salvador, Bahía, 31st July 1972 to 4th August 1972," trans. by LAD/CICARWS (Photocopy), where the following topic is suggested as item number one in the Agenda: "Talk on the Mission of the Church in the Process of Development."

version of the Declaration was accompanied by Bible texts and excerpts from Catholic and Protestant official statements related to each of the 30 articles approved by the UN. The pamphlet was widely distributed in Brazil through the Ecumenical Information Center (CEI) and has since been translated into several European languages. Beyond this, CESE has played a significant role in the evaluation of important social projects sponsored by international and national aid agencies.

From July 13-15, 1974, CESE held a meeting of economists, sociologists, educators, theologians, geologists, agronomists, anthropologists, physicians, social workers, pastors and priests to analyze and review its task. This led to a series of recommendations "to consolidate its programs and to propose measures to reformulate the present system of interchurch aid."<sup>65</sup> Following the Consultation, CESE's Assembly approved the recommendations at its regular meeting in São Paulo.

These recommendations represent an attempt to bring into practice the fundamental convictions that had brought CESE into being. In incorporating these recommendations and publishing them as part of an official statement of policy and philosophy, CESE meant to make explicit what theretofore had been expressed only implicitly, namely, that its service to men and women will have as priority those human groups that are suffering the greatest measure of "pressure and marginalization." It will "favor projects that seek improvement of this situation, starting with the place of localization or of action (influence) of the projects, as possible stages of a greater process of change, that will lead to new structural forms in a more humane social order."<sup>66</sup>

This philosophical (or ideological) definition has had obvious, far-reaching programmatic consequences. Chief among these, for the purposes of our study, are the decisions (1) to deepen the relation and contacts with such congenerous institutions as Diaconia (Church World Service<sup>67</sup>), the Projects Commission of the Lutheran Church

65. CESE, "Documento Especial," CEI Documento 56 (Agosto de 1974), p. 2.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

67. Two years before, it had been suggested that Diaconia could perhaps serve as the Commission proposed by the Salvador Consultation; James Mac Cracken, Director of Church World Service (and himself among the foreign

and CEI, (2) to bring CESE's line of action to the attention of the WCC and other international agencies and (3) to request resources from these agencies for the realization of its programmatic objectives, but then within the framework of CESE's philosophy and policy of action."<sup>68</sup>

It is clear that in terms of human development and the promotion of humanitarian measures, CESE's strategy is firmly rooted in an open commitment to the liberation of the exploited and oppressed. Moreover, it has managed to carry along a large and representative sector of Brazilian Christians.

CESE's ecumenical significance is even greater when one considers the strong and consistent contact it has maintained with CEI, an organization that grew out of ISAL-Brazil 10 years ago and has since become one of the most comprehensive ecumenical information networks in the country, with a tremendous potential for influencing the future of Brazilian ecumenism. We have here, without doubt, the seed for a future ecumenical structure of tremendous proportions.

In this connection, we cannot forego noting several important questions which will need to be dealt with in the future if CESE is to live up to its ecumenical reputation. What is the ecclesiological significance of an ecumenical organization whose explicit purpose it has been, from the very beginning, to support the cause of human development? Are its principles and philosophy comprehensive enough to provide the space in the future for a discussion of the more thorny issues of ecumenical relations: faith and order, evangelization, liturgy and catechesis?

The differences between Catholics and Protestants are, to be sure, being slowly worked on at an international level and have not been experienced as obstacles for a conciliar-ecumenical relationship such as that represented by the Caribbean Conference of Churches. One

guests at Salvador), rejected that suggestion. He stated that in the view of CWS, Diaconía was "a very important piece of the whole ecumenical picture in . . . Brazil," that there were "dimensions of interchurch and interfaith relationships envisaged in the Commission called for by the Salvador Consultation which cannot be developed through Diaconía as it [was] presently constituted" and that such a move might "not only be unfaithful to the spirit of the Consultation, but also injure the credibility of Diaconía within its own constituency." James Mac Cracken, Letter to Colonel Paulo Moura, December 12, 1972.

68. *Idem*, "Documento Especial," p. 6.

does wonder, however, how far CESE will be able to go in a situation such as that of Brazil, particularly in view of its organizational basis. Will the fact that the WCC and the RCC have been unable to make much progress in relation to the RCC's membership in the WCC not be a hindrance to a fuller ecumenical role for CESE, particularly in light of its organizational basis, namely, the CNBB and the churches that belong to the WCC? After all, Rome and Geneva have not had any problem of relating in terms of the issues of Development and Peace.<sup>69</sup> But when it comes to the question of official organizational relationship, numerous ecclesiological problems stand in the way.<sup>70</sup>

Even more questionable is the situation on the Protestant side. What is the significance of having a body made up of three churches which constitute a relatively small percentage of the total Protestant community? Is it not ironic that the Central Presbyterian Mission (a foreign body which has virtually no relation with the major Presbyterian churches of the country) is a charter member of CESE and that no *national* Presbyterian body has agreed to membership? What does the CESE project mean in relation to the Protestant Federation of Churches, which though crippled and suffering from "spiritual sclerosis," is, nevertheless, the most representative *interchurch* body in Brazilian Protestantism?

More thorny still is the relationship between CESE and CELAP. Given the fact that the latter is a continental project-screening group with a Brazilian representative, will it not overlap with the project-screening functions of the former?

Some of these questions, as has been observed, will have to be

69. The Society for Development and Peace (SODEPAX) is the only organized permanent joint WCC-Vatican body.

70. For a summary of the major issues at stake between Geneva and Rome, see "Relations with the W.C.C." and the "Third Official Report of the Joint Working Group Between the R.C.C. and the W.C.C.," *Information Service*, The Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City, No. 14 (April 1971/II), 3-7, 13-23. See also "Fourth Official Report of the Joint Working Group Between Roman Catholic Church and World Council of Churches," Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland, April 14-18, 1975, Document No. 22 (mimeographed). For a deep-going analysis of the theological differences between the two communities see, e.g., G. C. Berkouwer, *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965); and by the same author, *Nabetrachting op het Concilie* (Kampen: Kok, 1968).

dealt with as opportunities and circumstances permit. Others, however, will have to be faced in the immediate future if CESE (and CELAP) are to live up to their ecumenical potential.

### ECUMENICAL RECONSTRUCTION

The third form that the quest for authentic ecumenism has taken is more theological in nature. It can best be described as a reconsideration of the meaning of the Ecumenical Movement for the concrete reality of Latin America. It is a dimension of the quest that appears under different guises but is dominated by the notion of praxis as the *locus* of Christian unity and takes us to the very heart of ecclesiology.

#### *The Terminology*

One of the earliest specific references to this aspect of contemporary Protestant ecumenism is made in a meeting of secretaries of ecumenical organizations that took place in Montevideo, Uruguay from November 23-24, 1971. The secretaries focused their attention on the crisis of the Ecumenical Movement in general and Latin American Protestant ecumenical organizations in particular. According to Osvaldo Hirschmann, they agreed that what was needed was "the *reconstruction* of the ecumenical panorama."<sup>71</sup> By reconstruction was meant the reorientation and restructuring of the ecumenical enterprise; *i.e.*, its basis, style and embodiment. The question, however, was how the continental ecumenical organizations could go about such a reconstruction in view of their economic and cultural dependence on the Ecumenical Movement as a whole (which is dominated by the international centers of economic power) and their lack of adequate national grass-roots support. This was further seen as being complicated by the fact of grass-roots corruption, which is but "a reflex of the corruption [that exists] at the world level, where the greater part of the budget indicates the degree of power of the office that administers it."<sup>72</sup> In the light of this situation, says Hirschmann, the only way that an ecumenical transformation can come about in Latin America is through the "initiative of the 'leaders on top'..."<sup>73</sup> In such circumstances, the

71. Hirschmann, "Encuentro," above, p. 6. Italics mine.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

73. *Ibid.*



only thing that those who are committed to the grass roots can do is to tackle the task of influencing "those ecclesiastical organizations that are definitely the supporters of a superstructure like the WCC."<sup>74</sup>

Besides helping to clarify the conceptual framework in which the process of project-screening takes place, Hirschmann's report helps us to understand the general feeling from which the expression "ecumenical reconstruction" arose, namely, one of impotence and frustration on the part of ecumenical organizations *vis à vis* the Ecumenical Movement as embodied in the WCC. At the same time, it underscores the economico-cultural dimension (or limitation) of the ecumenical quest.

More recently, a similar concern has been expressed in CELADEC circles, but under slightly different terms. In his closing remarks at the end of the Bogotá Assembly, CELADEC's President, Federico Pagura, stated: "We are in a decisive stage in continental ecumenical relations, with regard to both the Catholic brethren and the *recomposition* of Protestant Ecumenism."<sup>75</sup> Pagura did not say explicitly what he meant by this term. But his colleague, Luis Reinoso, has defined the concept behind it as the "search for concrete ways of fostering the disappearance of the churches to make room for a movement of total liberation."<sup>76</sup>

This definition, to be sure, raises more questions than it answers. Generally speaking, however, it points in the direction of a regrouping of ecumenical activities around commitment to the process of liberation. This certainly would agree with Pagura's line of thought when in his closing words at Bogotá he referred to the new strategy of CELADEC in terms of "a continuous process of elaboration, characteristic not of an organization, but of a Movement."<sup>77</sup> In this context, he saw the task of helping the churches to commit themselves to the process of liberation as the fundamental challenge of the hour. This would mean, therefore, that the task of the Ecumenical Movement is to help churches and religious organizations commit themselves to and participate

74. *Ibid.*

75. Federico Pagura, *Actas, "Documento Quinta Asamblea,"* p. 19. Italics mine.

76. Reinoso, Interview, March 11-13, 1975.

77. Pagura, *Ibid.*

effectively -- each bringing "its own talent"<sup>78</sup> -- in the struggle for liberation.

If this interpretation is correct, ecumenical recomposition would then mean the regrouping of the Christian forces in an effective strategy for the liberation of the Continent. In such an enterprise, it is not the ecclesiastical institution that is of primary concern, but rather the commitment of Christians to a common goal, namely, the liberation of the world.

### *Reconstruction as a Problem of Praxis*

The terms "reconstruction" and "recomposition" may be thought of as synonymous. Each underscores a particular, yet interrelated aspect of a single phenomenon: the ecumenical challenge and experience of the praxis of faith.

This phenomenon, which Emilio Castro has rightly referred to as "praxeological ecumenism,"<sup>79</sup> is manifested where Christian obedience takes place. It is nonconfessional, noninstitutional, nonconceptual. It is rather rooted in concrete action, living experience and dynamic expression. This type of ecumenism can be traced to three basic causal factors.

First, as was indicated earlier in this chapter, it is a direct offspring of the frustration which the traditional Ecumenical Movement has produced among many Latin American Protestants. Apart from an occasional battle on religious liberty, the sponsorship of mass evangelistic crusades, a public statement now and then on the contribution of Protestants to the life and development of a country, the yearly gathering of one or two interdenominational organizations and once every so often the stimulation of a social project, the councils of churches have displayed neither a great deal of enthusiasm nor a high measure of missiological relevance. The Denominational alliances have been limited to occasional meetings made possible by the contribution of foreign denominational resources. Even the continental ecumenical gatherings, the III CELA included, have not managed to produce much enthusiasm and impact at the grass-roots level of churches and Christians.

Secondly, it is an ecumenism geared to the demands of efficacy.

78. Reinoso, interview.

79. Castro, "Ecumenismo," p. 18.

It seeks to answer the question: What does it mean to be a sign of the new humanity, the living church, a missionary community in the concrete historical situation of Latin America? What is the most efficacious way of expressing our oneness in Christ? Are the present ecumenical structures effectively fulfilling the ecumenical vocation of the church? What is the object of ecumenism: fellowship within ecclesiastical institutions or fellowship in the service of the world? What is the most efficacious way to put the resources of the one church at the service of its one mission in the one concrete world?

Thirdly, praxeological ecumenism has to do with the rediscovery, in concrete historical situations, of the experiential dimension of the Word. Not always does experience of the Word fit into traditional categories. Not always does it produce an ecclesial consensus. Indeed, it often produces tensions in the church, theologico-hermeneutical differences and ethico-missiological disagreements. All the same, it is rediscovered in praxis and transcends confessional, liturgical and organizational boundaries.

The trend toward reconstruction is an effort to reorient the Ecumenical Movement along praxeological lines. But since praxis is always relative to certain programs, goals, vision of reality and/or ultimate concerns, the quest for authentic ecumenism confronts us with the need to discriminate between different types of praxis and, therefore, between different kinds of unities. Conflict, then, is not seen as being incongruent with unity; in fact in Latin America it is basic to its experience. The question is, though, whether the dialectical view of ecumenism stands the test of history, theology, and ecclesiology? This is the question that Míguez-Bonino has undertaken to answer. His approach to the matter of unity constitutes a special contribution to the Latin American struggle for authentic ecumenism.

*The Struggle for the Church: The Special Contribution of José Míguez-Bonino*

For Míguez the question of perspective is fundamental to the problem of unity. The moment we begin reflecting on the problem of unity, the moment we begin dealing with the question of fellowship, he says, "we are plunged into the world of ideologies, secular categories, involvement, conflict and tension. . ." Not to face the issue of one's historical situation is to run the risk of "absolutizing as

'Christian unity' one of the patterns of thought and structure that can be so clearly dated historically, politically, ideologically."<sup>80</sup>

For this reason, he adds elsewhere, the question of full Christian fellowship, which for him is the basic problem of ecumenism, appears in Latin America as something that can only be "affirmed in darkness." This is so because our Christian obedience often leads us into totally different paths. In this sense, it can be said that "Christ unites us and Christ divides us."<sup>81</sup>

This dilemma is faced head on in a position paper presented at the 1973 Conference of Faith and Order in Salamanca.<sup>82</sup> In an attempt to locate the problem of unity, Míguez states that in Latin America the fundamental ecclesiological question has become a missiological one, namely, "*What is the Church for?*"<sup>83</sup> The question has led to a "growing polarization within each Church and across Christianity as a whole concerning the meaning of the Christian faith, its place and significance in our historical situation, the proper function and stance of the Church."<sup>84</sup> According to him, Latin American Christians "are up against conflicting and mutually exclusive understandings of what it means to be a Christian. . . in the last third of the twentieth century!"<sup>85</sup> This, he says, has led to "a regrouping of

80. José Míguez-Bonino, "Comments on 'Unity of the Church - Unity of Mankind'," *The Ecumenical Review* XXIV:1 (January 1972), 49, 50.

81. *Idem*, "Fellowship," above, 468, 470. See also Emilio Castro, "Conflict and Reconciliation," *Ibid.*, XXV:3 (July 1973), 289. According to Castro, Míguez was not referring to divisions of opinions but of human relations when he stated that "Christ unites us and Christ divides us." Castro adds:

"Inasmuch as Christ challenges us to take a stand with the disinherited of the earth, it is He who leads us towards divisions. Of course, we can be mistaken in our interpretation of the signs of the times and our judgments as to the best ways of raising the disinherited to their central role in history. But the seriousness of our choice is offered in obedience to Jesus Christ."

On the problem of unity and conflict, see further José Míguez-Bonino, "Christian Unity and Social Reconciliation: Consonance and Tension," *Study Encounter* 36, IX:1 (1973), p. 6, where he argues that the quest for Christian unity must be linked with the quest for human reconciliation and, likewise, "Christian solidarity" must be seen, in connection with "social conflicts that can admit no easy peace."

82. Cf. World Council of Churches, *What Kind of Unity, Faith and Order*, Paper 69 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1974).

83. Míguez-Bonino, "The Question of Unity," above, 212.

84. *Ibid.*, 213.

85. *Ibid.*

the Christian community." While such a regrouping does not necessarily mean that the ecclesiastical structures are breaking up, it does mean that "confessional questions" have been put into "brackets" and new "lines of unity and separation" have been drawn. Accordingly, he refers to " 'families' of Christians, drawn by a common answer to the question: What is the Church for? "86 In his opinion, these new transconfessional families are:

1. The "Charismatic" family, which defines the purpose of the Church in terms of the experience of "a common immediacy of the Spirit, a liberating and transforming experience opening a new realm of existence, 'the life in the Spirit,' characterized by joy, freedom and love." For Charismatics, "The Church is the realm where life becomes available and, consequently, the invitation to participate in the fellowship is the most significant form of service."<sup>87</sup>

2. The "revolutionary" family. This family is made up of all those Christians who have committed themselves to the process of liberation. For them, the gospel is "a call for justice" in the context of the situation of continental oppression and exploitation. The church, they assert, is the community that makes a concrete historical commitment "which corresponds to God's liberating purpose at a given time." The deeper dimensions of the gospel, they claim, "can only be historically articulated from within the socio-political struggle."<sup>88</sup>

3. The "conservative" family, which locates the church's *raison d'être* in the preservation and transmission of the faith. This family, says Míguez, is characterized by its "conception of the Church as a socially stable and structured religious body charged with the preservation and transmission of a religious tradition..." This tradition is usually bound to a cultural and ideological heritage

86. *Ibid.*, p. 214. See also "Autodefinición del claustro de profesores de ISEDET," *Cuadernos de teología*, III:3 (1974), 171-176. In a clear statement on the irrelevance of confessional theologies, the faculty of this prestigious institution state: "We consider confessions to be testimonies that contribute to our present understanding. But we believe that the continuation of separated confessional theologies constitutes an unjustifiable anachronism which absolutizes an epoch and a history which is not ours." (p. 175)

87. Míguez-Bonino, *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

whose "militant character . . . becomes more evident as that heritage . . . is challenged."<sup>89</sup>

Míguez-Bonino maintains that these ecumenical lines bring into the open "a true 'confessional conflict'." The quest for unity is thus, at the same time, a "struggle for the true division."<sup>90</sup>

All of this leads to a theological reconsideration of the church. Conflicting views on the *purpose* of the church lead inevitably to a further question: "Where is the church to be found?" The institutional or formal answer to this query is, for Míguez, not satisfactory, because it does not deal with the problem of "the continuation of purposes and functions." The question then becomes, "Where, in the Christian 'families' in Latin America, do we find a community of purpose and of intention. . . ?" He answers that such a community is found "only in the transconfessional 'families'."<sup>91</sup> Accordingly, he holds that

The roots of our problems are this divorce between institutional continuity and the transmission of the heritage, on the one hand, and a missionary community and a living Word, on the other. The problem of unity does not consist for us in bringing the two things together in theory or in theological statements but historically and in reality. The ecumenical question is for us the struggle for a *reconstitution* of the Church.<sup>92</sup>

This struggle confronts the Ecumenical Movement with two theological challenges.

The first is provoked by the decisive role of sociological and ideological factors. Míguez argues that all concepts and models of unity are bound by a particular "historical and ideological matrix."<sup>93</sup> This means, specifically and concretely, that in order to arrive at a faithful understanding of the meaning of unity, the world-wide Ecumenical Movement has got to be set free "from the control of the liberal-democratic ideology" which has shaped it, together with the present confessional families.<sup>94</sup> As it now stands, the problem of unity has been posed and answered from the perspective of the North Atlantic. This being so, it cannot be expected that Latin

89. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

90. *Ibid.*

91. *Ibid.*

92. *Ibid.* Italics mine.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 218.

94. *Ibid.*

Americans and other representatives from the Third World follow the same road to unity.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, the future of world ecumenism may well depend upon the capacity of "Northern European and American churches" to "overcome their natural tendency to consider their Christianity (their theology, worship, ethical and ecclesiastical traditions) as normative and universal," as Míguez warns in another work.<sup>96</sup>

Secondly, the struggle for the reconstitution of the church challenges us to recognize the fact that neither "church" nor "unity" are "universal" but "analogous and critical concepts."<sup>97</sup> Here he goes back to an earlier work, *Integración humana y unidad cristiana*, mentioned earlier in this study, where he proposes a "nominalistic strategy" for the Protestant search for unity.<sup>98</sup> In the present article, however, he adds to the notion of ecumenical analogy the category of "critical" and relates it to the wider context of ecclesiology and the general Ecumenical Movement.

If church and unity are analogous and critical concepts, then "the attempt to erect one of the existing ecclesial entities as 'the full measure' of ecclesial reality against which one could measure the

95. Cf. Lalive D'Epinay, *El refugio*, pp. 224ff., where he analyzes the problem of ecumenism among Chilean Protestants and underscores the strangeness of this phenomenon to the Latin American Protestant experience. According to him, the Ecumenical Movement is more a sociological phenomenon than a theological happening. Borrowing from Roger Melh, *Traité de sociologie du protestantisme* (Paris and Neuchatel: Delachaux and Niestlé, 1966), Lalive D'Epinay states that the Ecumenical Movement is the fruit of a twofold process. On the one hand, a new missionary situation in 20th century Europe and North America is challenging the radical nature of Christianity and forcing the church to give evidence of its authenticity. On the other hand, a new social universe is emerging, relativising the church's role as the sole spiritual institution. These two factors, says Lalive, are forcing the churches of the North Atlantic "to rediscover the concept of the *oikoumene*: the unity of the Church in the totality of the inhabited earth." (p. 226)

Latin American Christians, Catholic and Protestants, have not experienced these pressures. Their different sociological situation has brought them face to face with different social forces. It is natural, therefore, to see their rediscovery of the *oikoumene* in terms of radically different frontiers.

96. José Míguez-Bonino, "The Test of Unity," *One World*, No. 6 (May 1975), 18.

97. Míguez-Bonino, "The Question of Unity," p. 219.

98. See chapter V.

'ecclesial density' of the rest" should be abandoned. This would mean, consequently, accepting "the 'struggle for the Church' as the ecclesiology of unity."<sup>99</sup> In effect, what he is proposing is an ecumenical realism in which existing lines of divisions and emerging signs of unity are taken seriously, "not as curious additions to the old and trusted patterns but as the basic reference for any discussion on unity."<sup>100</sup>

The quest for authentic ecumenism, viewed as an effort to reconstruct the Ecumenical Movement, is, then, according to Míguez, "the struggle for the Church as it strives to take shape in the quest for a new kind of human life in a new society."<sup>101</sup> If this struggle is to succeed, however, several requirements will have to be met; he outlines them as follows.

1. It will be necessary "to clarify both theologically and ideologically what is at stake in the struggle of the different 'families' " that have been mentioned.<sup>102</sup>

2. The new "confessing families" have a vocabulary and a repertoire of signs to express their Christian identity which need to be "incorporated as germinal nuclei for the reconstitution of a Christian identity and presence in the new society."<sup>103</sup>

3. Critical dialogue between the different families is essential. Though this is "particularly difficult in the case of the relation between the traditional institutional churches and the new ecclesial realities," says Míguez, it must be maintained in order to cope effectively with the problem of order and tradition in the move towards a "new ecclesial configuration."<sup>104</sup>

4. Also required is "an ecumenical discussion of the nature of proclamation." This is especially important in view of the fact that

The almost total substitution of academic for 'spiritual' discernment of the Word and the ideological flight from concreteness have robbed proclamation of all convoking and discriminate efficacy. We are faced with two questions. One, a reconsideration of the nature of proclamation. The other, a pastoral

99. Míguez-Bonino, "The Question of Unity," p. 219.

100. *Ibid.*

101. *Ibid.*

102. *Ibid.*

103. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

104. *Ibid.*



one, the exposure of the Christian community to the missionary appeal of a challenging word.<sup>105</sup>

5. It is further necessary that joint projects be continued on the basis of the least possible consensus. The importance of such projects should not be measured by their "jointness" but rather based on the fact (1) that when the action develops its own dynamics it poses the question of unity and division at a deeper level than does usual ecumenical discussion; (2) that this breaks the deadlock between orthodoxy and orthopraxis in that it "engenders a theological reflection" which is born out of action and turns critically on it; and (3) that the carrying out of these projects is seen not as a consequence of faith but as the obedience of faith.<sup>106</sup>

6. Finally, it will be necessary to relate such traditional Christian signs as the eucharist and baptism "to the different and conflicting confessional and transconfessional Christian communities existing in the present."<sup>107</sup>

In his response to Míguez's paper, Gunther Gassmann accepted the fact of the historical conditioning of ecumenical models. But, he asked, "is there not a more fundamental criterion than the ideological one: namely, the biblical witness which provides certain basic structures for the church, its task and its unity?"<sup>108</sup> Míguez gives a response to this important question in the last chapter of his *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*.

Taking a cue from Irenaeus' vision of "a single humanity created by God in order that it might grow toward full maturity," he locates the church between the vision of "the original, all encompassing, and final unity of human history and . . . the particular density of the events gathered around the name of Jesus Christ."<sup>109</sup> This makes the Reformed doctrine of the two covenants especially attractive. The Covenant of Creation is seen in relation to the first part of the vision. Creation is thus understood as "the installation of a movement" in which humanity is invited and commanded to undertake the tasks of creating its "own history and culture," transforming

105. *Ibid.*, pp. 220, 221.

106. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

107. *Ibid.*

108. Gunther Gassmann, "A Reaction to 'A Latin American Attempt to Locate the Question of Unity'," *Ibid.*, p. 223.

109. Míguez-Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. 164.

"the world and making it [its] own house" and exploring "the configurations of . . . relationships available to [it]."<sup>110</sup> It is in this context that the Covenant of Redemption must be understood. Jesus Christ is the embodiment of God's active will to restore humankind to its creational vocation. Faith in him is a step toward, not beyond, humanity.

"In this soteriological order," he adds, "the Church has a distinct but provisional and subordinate place."<sup>111</sup> Its task is to proclaim the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. This means the announcement of the possibility of God's forgiveness and the call to sanctification, which Míguez understands respectively as "man's freedom in God's grace to take up again, in whatever circumstances and after whatever failure and destruction, the work committed to him in creation," and "the invitation to effective love and the freedom to love."<sup>112</sup> He qualifies this task of announcement, however, by underscoring the historical character of proclamation and faith. These "take place in history and as historically defined actions," he insists.<sup>113</sup> "The question of proclamation," he says, is "always the question as to the praxis of faith of the Church, and to the historical option in which this faith is embodied."<sup>114</sup>

For Míguez-Bonino, then, the church is the historically conditioned fellowship of those who have responded to God's call to forgiveness and sanctification. The church, he argues, "cannot exist except as it concretely celebrates this freedom, reflects on it and proclaims it."<sup>115</sup> He quickly qualifies this assertion, however, by referring to the eschatological, provisional nature of the church. The church is historically conditioned because it lives "between the times."<sup>116</sup> The full humanity toward which it points lies still ahead.

It is within this ecclesiological perspective that he locates the concept of the struggle for the church. He sees the "existing ecclesiastical institutions and communities" as "the field in which the struggle for the Church takes place."<sup>117</sup> Only as the church lives

110. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

111. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

112. *Ibid.*

113. *Ibid.*

114. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

115. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

116. *Ibid.*

117. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

out its faith in concrete historical situations does its true Christian identity become clearly evident. "A Church," he comments, "becomes a community of faith in decision," in its historical options.<sup>118</sup>

Such options, however, are not made in a vacuum. It is here where Gassmann's question is specifically answered. Míguez maintains that

a Christian option cannot take place except through . . . a theological and ethical reflection which incorporates a certain analytical and ideological understanding of history into a careful and intelligent listening to the word of Scripture and the tradition of the Church.<sup>119</sup>

In other words, the struggle for the true church is a hermeneutical struggle, a struggle for the interpretation of the faith in concrete situations in the light of Scripture and in dialogue with the church's tradition. Or as he puts it elsewhere in his book: the problem of "how are . . . the 'germinal' events" of the faith, namely, "God's dealing with Israel, the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the hope of the Kingdom — how are they determinative in this single, synthetical fact that we call the historical praxis of a Christian?"<sup>120</sup> And a further implicit problem is determining what their significance was in the historical praxis of our Christian forefathers.

Thus, while not denying the fundamental criterion of the biblical witness, Míguez would insist that it must be gotten at via a hermeneutical process. In this process ideological analysis must be seen as an integral part of the analysis of the historical present.

The relevance of these insights to the question of ecumenical reconstruction is more than evident. Míguez-Bonino's special contribution can be summarized along the following lines.

First of all, he has shown in historical, theological and ecclesiological terms, why and in what sense there is a reconsideration of the Ecumenical Movement going on in Latin America. By underscoring the new transconfessional boundaries of the Continent, he has brought out into the open the fact that the question of unity lies outside traditional ecumenical lines. Ecumenical reconstruction is, accordingly, not just something that lies in the realm of the utopic

118. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

119. *Ibid.*

120. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

but is an essential part of the present. There has to be a reordering of Latin American ecumenism because of the existing ecclesiological situation, a situation that is both legitimate and necessary if one bears in mind the analogical and critical character of the terms "church" and "unity," and the historico-ideological context from which the Ecumenical Movement emerged.

Secondly, Míguez-Bonino has shown that while it is true that an ecumenical regrouping is already occurring, it is no less true that an enormous ecumenical task still lies ahead of us. By enumerating what needs to be done in the struggle for the true church, he has created a safeguard against the danger of the absolutization of the reality of conflict, the institutionalization of existing divisions and/or the generalization of historical particularities. An ecumenical challenge of profound significance is thus put before the new "confessional" families which, if taken up, could bring about a great advance on the road toward an authentic ecumenical expression of the Christian faith throughout the Continent.

Thirdly, he has shown the interrelatedness of the ecumenical quest with the hermeneutical challenge of our day and, therefore, with the historicity of the church. His insistence on the necessity of using socio-analytical and ideologico-political criteria in the field of ecclesiology prevents the question of unity from being treated in abstract theological terms, and the search for fellowship from being reduced to a superficial spirituality.

Fourthly, his analysis helps to liberate the church and the Ecumenical Movement from the institutional imprisonment into which it has fallen, in Latin America but also around the world. A theological bridge is thus built for a substantive dialogue not only between those who on the basis of their respective attitudes *vis à vis* the Movement embodied in the WCC could be identified as "ecumenicals" and "non-ecumenicals," but also between the noninstitutional ecumenism of the charismatic/revolutionary line and the institutional ecumenism of the conservatives.

This latter statement, however, introduces one of the problem areas of Míguez's analysis. Though it gives a generally comprehensive picture of the ecumenical panorama, it is still a partial description of the total reality. His three transconfessional families, for instance, do not exhaust by any means the horizontal panorama. There have been other ecclesologically relevant types of regroupings that have taken place in recent years.

One type of transconfessional family not accounted for by this gifted and distinguished theologian is that which revolves around the notion of *diakonia*. This type consists of groups of individual Christians and organizations who form ecumenical fellowships for the purpose of responding to the existing social needs in their respective countries. CESE is a good example, but others could be cited.

There is the case of CEPAD (Protestant Development Committee), an interdenominational Protestant body that was set up in response to the 1972 earthquake in Nicaragua to provide a platform for 32 denominations to coordinate their social endeavor in this country. One could also mention the interesting informal diaconal network that has spread across the Central American isthmus and Colombia which combines such social service bodies as CEPAD and AGAPE (a Presbyterian social action group) in Guatemala, ACORDE (Protestant Ecumenical Action and Coordination) and CEDEN (National Protestant Development and Emergency Committee) in Honduras, Caravanas de Buena Voluntad (Good Will Caravans) in Costa Rica and Acción Unida (United Action) in Colombia in a loose fellowship oriented to the diaconal dimension of the churches' mission. These organizations hold occasional combined meetings, share resources, experiences and insights and serve as nuclei of mobilization in times of national catastrophies such as the 1973 earthquake in Tilarán, Costa Rica or the recent earthquake in Guatemala.

To dismiss this type of fellowship as one more example of traditional Protestant cooperative social service endeavor is to fail to see their real ecumenical significance in an area, which, as was noted in chapter VII, constitutes one of the most ecumenically barren regions of the Continent. Indeed, the activities of these various bodies is not limited to social service. They engage in evangelistic activities in remote areas, sponsor pastoral conferences and retreats and provide pastoral care for those who serve as well as for those who are served. But their functional, though not theological, understanding of the church is dominated by the notion of service. The church is the community which is always at the service of the needy.

A second transconfessional family not considered in Míguez's analysis is the "old" evangelistic family. If the social-service groups are defined by the concept of service, this latter can be defined by the concept of proclamation. It can be loosely designated as

*kerygmatic* because of its emphasis on the proclamation of the gospel as the distinguishing mark of the church. The Evangelistic or Kerygmatic family is clearly discernable in the continuous programs of mass evangelism represented by the activities of such continental evangelists as Luis Palau and Pablo Finkenbinder, the Church Growth Movement and the several interdenominational and denominational congresses on evangelization. For this family, the church exists for the proclamation of the gospel; it is the place where people are turning to God in repentance.

A third family falling outside Míguez's typology can be characterized by another biblical category: *didaché*. It is the theological reflection movement embodied in the Latin American Theological Fraternity and other national theological fellowships that have emerged in recent years (e.g., the Mexican Theological Fraternity and the Evangelical Theological Association of Buenos Aires). Being nuclei for theological reflection, it would not be difficult to get from among its members a balanced, well-structured theological statement on the church. When it comes to practice, however, this family acts as if it were dominated by the concept of doctrinal teaching. The church exists for the faithful exposition of the faith; it is the place where the Bible is correctly understood and interpreted.

These additional groupings may not have, admittedly, the clearly identifiable marks reflected in the others. Consequently, they may look even more caricaturist than Míguez's three families.<sup>121</sup> But this is just the point: all of the so-called "new" confessional families are relative: there are simply too many areas of overlap and variables to draw clear boundaries between them. The best example is that of the Charismatic family, which is rightly divided between the classical Pentecostal groups, the Protestant and the Catholic Neo-Pentecostals. The first can be as denominationally (and confessionally) minded as any of the Mainline Protestant denominations.<sup>122</sup> The Protestant Neo-Pentecostals, especially in Brazil, have not been able to avoid establishing denominational boundaries.<sup>123</sup> And the Catholic Neo-

121. Cf. Míguez-Bonino, "The Question of Unity," p. 215.

122. This is especially the case in countries with large Pentecostal denominations: Chile, Brazil, Mexico and Puerto Rico.

123. At least four Mainline charismatic denominations have come into existence in Brazil: the National Baptist Convention, the Wesleyan Methodist

Pentecostals have been noted to be carefully searching for approval from their respective hierarchies.<sup>124</sup> How far, then, can the Charismatics really be classified as a distinct "confessional" family?

Míguez's analysis, to be sure, brings out an important dimension of the total ecumenical panorama. It is not so clear, though, that the real differences exist *only* across the transconfessional lines, as he implies. For within these lines old differences keep popping up. The quest for unity may be a struggle for the church, but it is questionable whether this struggle is totally free from old confessional boundaries.

Intimately related to this is a second questionable aspect of Míguez's typology, namely, his contention that we find the presence of the living Word *only* in the transconfessional families, that only there is a true community of intention and purpose to be found. Does he mean thereby that the thousands of celebrations of the Eucharist that take place week after week and month after month across the thousands of congregations spread throughout every village, town and city of Latin America, that the proclamation of the gospel and the exposition of the Bible that is heard from the pulpits, that the many diaconal and evangelistic efforts that are carried out by and through the faithful, individually and collectively – that all of these activities say nothing about where the church is? Is not the most primary distinguishing characteristic of the church the affirmation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9-10)? Can it then be denied that this, the most simple of all Christian confessions, takes place in the most distinctive mark of the institutional church, namely, the regular worship services and activities of the different congregations?

Church, the Renewed Independent Presbyterian Church and the Christian Presbyterian Church. The latter two recently merged forming the Renewed Presbyterian Church.

124. Cf., for example, the following articles published in two predominantly Catholic Charismatic Renewal magazines: Kevin Ranaghan, "Catholic Charismatic Renewal: the First Seven Years," *New Covenant*, 3:8 (March 1974), 3ff.; Avery Dulles, S. J., "Christian Unity and the Charismatic Renewal" and Cindy Conniff, "Moving On," *Ibid.*, 4:3 (September 1974), 16ff., 23ff.; "Obispos Aceptan a Carismáticos," Reprinted from the original in *L'Observatore Romano* (16 February 1975), *Alabaré*, No. 13 (1975), 5; Marcos McGrath, "Carta a los miembros y asesores de la Renovación Cristiana en el Espíritu Santo, Arquidiócesis de Panamá, Panamá, 23 de octubre de 1974," *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 25.

I agree with his characterization of the confessional qualities of the transconfessional families. I agree that in their missionary vitality and dynamic experience the Word is made alive and the community of faith is uniquely manifested. I agree that they are a significant sign of the necessary reconstruction of the church which must emerge "from below, as a community of spiritual and historical engagement."<sup>125</sup> But that these families alone constitute the *loci* of the proclamation of "a living Word, a word which is no mere transmission and explanation but also proclamation and convocation"<sup>126</sup> is an assertion that can only be judged as being partial and one-sided.

A third problem with Míguez's insights on the question of unity is the fact that they do not deal with the practical side of the ecumenical situation. The problem can best be stated in the form of several questions. Who is to undertake the tasks he has outlined if the ecumenical quest is not given a concrete organizational shape? Moreover, how is the challenge of a world that stands outside the frontiers of the faith to be met if the quest for unity does not take a programmatic form? And finally, how do we deal with existing ecclesial and ecclesiastical, missiological and institutional realities if we do not create the necessary space for a critical dialogue?

After this long ecumenical journey, the old vacuum remains. Protestantism, in general, and its Mainline variant, in particular, have not been able to advance beyond Míguez's old "nominalistic strategy." Bridges have been built; the way is beginning to be cleared for the sound analysis and evaluation of interchurch aid projects; the ecumenical issues have been more sharply defined. But none of the forms that the quest for an authentic ecumenism has taken have been able to produce an effective solution to the urgent practical problems of organizational competition, interecclesial and interecclesiastical strife and missiological imperatives. How can Protestantism move beyond the "spontaneous" and create the basis for an effective dialogue? Must Latin Americans be condemned to a survival-of-the-fittest ecumenism? Can there not be a broad enough structure within which the struggle for the church can take place? Must the

125. José Míguez-Bonino, "Identity and Communication," (Photocopy), p. 6. Translated into German: "Identität und Kommunikation," *Zeitschrift für Mission*, No. 1 (1975), 5-12.

126. *Idem*, "The Question of Unity," p. 216.



struggle necessarily be patterned on the law of the jungle? Is there no room for a pluralistic ecumenical structure with a minimum consensus? This is the question that is yet to be answered and forms one of the foremost ecumenical challenges which lie ahead for Protestant Christianity in Latin America.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE QUEST FOR MISSIOLOGICAL DEPTH

The third quest that characterized Mainline Protestantism in the post-III CELA period was a search for missiological depth. This quest encompassed an effort on the part of a number of theologians to deepen the church's understanding of the mission of God and the implications of this mission for Protestant Christianity in Latin America.

In this chapter, three such indigenous efforts shall be analyzed critically. These three studies are: *Historia de las misiones*, by Justo L. González; *Hacia una pastoral latinoamericana*, by Emilio Castro; and *Salvación es liberación*, by Mortimer Arias. These books were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (1) publication in Latin America in the post-III CELA period; (2) specific missiological orientation; (3) genuine contribution to a deeper understanding of God's mission in Latin America and the way in which the church participates in that mission; (4) authorship by recognized Mainline Protestants.

All three authors provide a broad geographical representation of Latin America: González comes from the Hispanic Caribbean; Castro, from the River Plate; and Arias, though Uruguayan by birth, has gained continental recognition as a church leader in the Andean country of Bolivia. Their books were published in 1970, 1974 and 1973 respectively. They thus represent a broad chronological sampling of our period of research. Moreover, each book has a specific missiological scope, geared to help Latin American Protestant Christians to reflect critically on their missionary praxis.

It is highly significant that González, Castro and Arias are Methodists. They are perfect examples of the extraordinary influence which Methodism has had upon the Mainline Protestantism of the last 15 years. Indeed, no other denominational family has had as many recognized continental leaders during this period. This is evidence in the fact that a good number of Latin Americans cur-

rently serving in the WCC are Methodists;<sup>1</sup> that in continental ecumenism Methodists are contributing the largest amount of leadership;<sup>2</sup> that the leading Protestant publishing company is Methodist (Editorial La Aurora); and that Methodists have produced the greatest number of recognized Protestant theologians.

At the bottom of this phenomenon lies the fact that Methodists, especially in the River Plate, Brazil and Cuba, have invested heavily in leadership training and development. This explains why they have been able to exercise such an influential and dynamic leadership within Mainline Protestantism, even though their numerical strength in Latin America is far less than denominational families like the Baptists and Presbyterians.

The three case studies to be undertaken in this chapter will follow a fairly uniform methodology. To begin with, there will be a biographical sketch of the author, followed by an analysis of his book, including the context within which it was written, the structure, a summary of its content and the perspective from which the author writes, concluding with an evaluation on the basis of its positive and critical aspects. In the analysis, special attention will be given to the missiological insights of each author, the implications of these insights for Protestant Christianity, and their significance for the overall task of missiology.

### JUSTO L. GONZÁLEZ, *HISTORIA DE LAS MISIONES*

#### *Biography*

Justo L. González was born in Cuba. He was educated at the

1. This has been made even more conspicuous by the election of José Míguez-Bonino — an Argentine Methodist — into the presidium of the WCC at the V Assembly held in Nairobi, Kenya from November 23 to December 10, 1975.

2. For example, the President and General Secretary of CELADEC are both Methodists. ISAL's General Secretary for Administration as well as the Director of Editorial Tierra Nueva are Methodists. The President of UNELAM, the General Secretary of ULAJE and the President of CELAP are all Methodists. Of the four Associations of Theological Institutions, the General Secretaries of two are Methodists. Even the General Secretary of the Bible Societies in Latin America, the Regional Secretary of the World Association of Christian Communications and the latter's Latin American Vice-President are all Methodists. To make the Methodist leadership even more significant, the President of the Planning Committee for the IV CELA is a Methodist!

University of Havana, Union Theological Seminary (Matanzas, Cuba) and Yale University. He received his doctorate from Yale and thereafter pursued further studies at the universities of Strassburg and Basel. After serving for several years as Professor of Historical Theology and Dean of the Faculty at Union Theological Seminary (SEPR) in Río Piedras, Puerto Rico, he became Professor of World Christianity and Historical Theology at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, the post he holds at present. He has served in the Commission of Faith and Order of the WCC and is widely recognized as a gifted historian and expert on the development of Christianity in the Caribbean.

Though González has been working outside of Latin America for the last several years, he has clearly kept his links with the church in that part of the world, distinguishing himself as chairman of the Christian Literature Commission of the Caribbean, contributing to the Spanish edition of *Good News for Modern Man*, continuing his literary production in Spanish and participating in the Historical Studies' Commission of the Latin American Church (CEHILA), which is preparing a nine-volume ecumenical and definitive history of Christianity in the Continent.

In 1973 he delivered the Harry Strachan Lectures at the Latin American Biblical Seminary in connection with the celebration of the institution's 50th anniversary,<sup>3</sup> and returned in 1974 as guest professor of Historical Theology. He also serves as a permanent consultant for the Ninth Province (Latin America) of the Protestant Episcopal Church's Board of Theological Education.

### *Analysis*

*Context.* *Historia de las misiones* was published at the height of the author's tenure at the SEPR. It was preceded by, among other works, *Revolución y encarnación*,<sup>4</sup> *Historia del pensamiento cristiano*<sup>5</sup> and *The Development of Christianity in the Latin Caribbean*.<sup>6</sup>

3. Cf. Justo L. González, *Itinerario de la teología cristiana* (Miami: Editorial Caribe, 1975).

4. Briefly noted in chapter IV.

5. Justo L. González, *Historia del pensamiento cristiano* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1965). A second volume was published in 1972 and the third and final is due to appear shortly. All three volumes have been published in English by Abingdon, Nashville, Tennessee.

6. Justo L. González, *The Development of Christianity in the Latin Caribbean* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969).

The latter constitutes a more detailed elaboration of the history of Christian missions in the Latin Caribbean than *Misiones*.<sup>7</sup>

*Structure.* In *Misiones*, González gives a general interpretation of the initial stages of the expansion of the church. He covers the historical development of Christianity in eight chapters (II-IX), setting forth his theoretical framework in the first, and concluding with an overview of the contemporary crisis and promise of mission.

The author gives primary emphasis to the geographical aspect of the expansion of Christianity. He follows a diachronic (vertical, chronological) pattern and organizes the bulk of his material around the three major Christian groupings: Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism. Every so often there is reference to distinctly confessional groups (Nestorian and Monophysitic, for example) and to non-Christian religions, but this is more the exception than the rule. By and large, the story, especially in its post-Reformational stages, is developed along the lines of the three major Christian groupings as they appear in the different regions of missionary penetration. He manages to include in his discussion, nevertheless, the question of missionary methods and gives considerable attention to the role of individual missionaries.

*Summary.* In chapter I, González sets forth the boundaries of his study: the *geographical* expansion of Christianity. But even this is too broad, he argues, for a geographical analysis requires the incorporation of the contribution of several disciplines: world geogra-

7. For example, in this work he dedicates a full chapter to the missionary theory that was developed in the early colonial period (pp. 26ff.), as against only four paragraphs on this subject in *Misiones*. He notes, explicitly, perceptively and correctly, that in the missionary efforts of the early colonial period the methods (or praxis) preceded the theory (pp. 19ff.) and he gives attention to the role of the hierarchy in the spread of the faith (pp. 33ff.). In *Misiones* these things are barely noted. Finally, the concluding chapter constitutes a rather thorough analysis of the missionary situation in the Latin Caribbean (pp. 115ff.), thorough because it is grounded on substantive criteria. He analyses Christianity in the Latin Caribbean on the basis of three criteria: relevance, growth and reconciliation; and of a fourfold typology: Catholicism, Fundamentalism, Pentecostalism and historic Protestantism. In *Misiones*, as it will be pointed out, he mainly uses the advance and impact of technology as the basis for his analysis of the contemporary situation. Yet his *Latin Caribbean* reveals a lack of sensitivity to the phenomenon of popular religiosity, evident especially in his tendency to look at Catholicism singularly as against the threefold types pointed out in the treatment of Protestantism.

why and history, sociology, psychology and history of religions, linguistics, cultural anthropology and communication theory as well as theology and ethics. Therefore, he limits further the scope of the book to the level of an introductory survey.

The story begins with a reference to the biblical roots of the missionary movement, including the OT background, Jesus' eschatological conception of mission and the church's eschatological character. Attention is given to the geographical expansion noted in Acts and the epistles as well as to the pattern of mission work. The author argues that the early missionary enterprise did not respond so much to "a supposedly missionary strategy according to which the disciples were to take the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the region..."<sup>8</sup> It was rather the result of Paul's eschatological conception of mission. This conception led Paul and his colleagues, to "preach the Gospel to all of the nations." "Paul," he says, "did not think so much in terms of individuals as of nations."<sup>9</sup>

In the following four chapters (II-V), the author surveys the development of the Christian missionary movement up to the 18th century. Since this section covers familiar ground in mission history, we need not spend much time summarizing it, except to note González's reference to the beginnings of Catholic missiology in the 16th century. He points to the significant works of Francisco de Vitoria, Tomás de Jesús and José de Acosta. Of these, the most important is the six-volume work of Acosta which, in addition to its theological, anthropological and methodological insights, is backed by the author's own missionary experience in Perú.

Approximately two thirds of González's book is dedicated to the 19th and 20th centuries. In an introductory chapter (VI), an overview is given of the general characteristics that have accompanied the phenomenal expansion of Christianity during the last two centuries. This is followed, in the next three chapters, by a survey of the history of the so-called younger churches, namely, those of the Far East and South Pacific, Africa and Latin America; the chapter treats the history of the churches of Europe and North America only as it relates to the development of the Asian, African and Latin American churches.

In this connection, he demonstrates that the lands of what is

8. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

today known as the Third World were not only the object of an impressive missionary advance but also of "the greatest [colonial] expansion that civilization has ever known,"<sup>10</sup> and describes the feelings of superiority and the spirit of condescension that characterized the white man of the XIX century. Mission work, says González, often appeared as the "'white man's burden' — the white man's responsibility of taking his civilization to the rest [of the world] and, with it, his faith."<sup>11</sup>

In the 20th century, Christianity entered a period of readjustment. The conscious or unconscious alliance between mission and colonialism came under heavy criticism. New nations emerged and demanded a fair share in the technological advance of the world.

At the same time, the notion of a world church with a mission everywhere led Christianity to be a "truly universal faith and not the possession of the white man."<sup>12</sup> For their part, the "younger churches" began to come to grips with their social responsibility, overcoming the individualistic legacy that many of their missionary forefathers had left them.

According to González, for the past two centuries the Far East and South Pacific have been the focal point of the missionary enterprise of Europe and North America. Considerable attention is given to India, with brief discussions on the state of the Mar Thoma Christians, Roman Catholic missions, Protestant developments and the ecumenical experiments of the Protestant churches. This is followed by a survey of Christianity in Ceylon, Southeast Asia, the Malayan Archipelago, the Philippines, Japan and Korea, China and Australia, and the Pacific Islands.

Moving to Africa and the Islamic World, González traces the state of the old oriental churches, including their Monophysite and Nestorian forms; this is followed by a survey of Roman Catholic and Protestant developments in Northern Africa. He mentions briefly the situation of the Church of Ethiopia, but dedicates the larger portion of this section to the missionary expansion in black Africa and Madagascar.

The largest single chapter, IX, comprising one fourth of the book,

10. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

is dedicated to Latin America in the 19th and 20th centuries. This chapter also turned out to be, by the author's own assessment, the most difficult to write.<sup>13</sup> Warning that "the history of missions in Latin America still remains to be written," inasmuch as numerous preliminary studies need to be published before such a task can be undertaken,<sup>14</sup> González goes on to give a general description of the new missionary situation, showing why Latin America became a ripe field for the Protestant advance that began in the second half of the 19th century. He then traces the development of Christianity country by country, following a Catholic-Protestant pattern of organization of the material, with brief notes on the state of Orthodoxy in those countries where it is present.

He concludes with an overview of the leading characteristics of this period. As far as Catholicism is concerned, the 19th century witnessed a period of stagnation and internal difficulties, which it was able to overcome only during the second quarter of the 20th century. For its part, Protestantism first appeared via the migratory waves entering the southern countries (notably Argentina, Chile and Uruguay). It was followed by the liberal political movement during the second half of the 19th century. The Protestant alliance with liberalism, however, became an obstacle for the missionary cause. "In effect," he says, "liberalism, with its opposition to all principles of religious authority and its emphasis on human dignity [*sic*], was opposed to the Protestant principles of the authority of the Scripture and man's need of redemption from the outside."<sup>15</sup>

Generally speaking, the Protestant variant that has achieved the greatest amount of indigeneity and expansion in Latin America is Pentecostalism. This has reduced Mainline Protestantism to a minority. In view of this situation, "it is necessary that the 'historic' churches deal seriously with the question of the character of their own mission. . . within the Latin American Protestant movement."<sup>16</sup>

The author concludes his long journey with a reflection on the crisis and promise of mission. Likening the present age to that of the barbarian invasions of the Roman Empire or of the discovery of the Americas, he describes the contemporary crisis in terms of the break-

13. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 327.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 438.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 438.



ing up of the *Corpus Christianum*. This crisis is due not so much to the churches' loss of the financial and political support of the state but rather to the loss of their prestigious role in society as the ally of modern science, western expansionist power and economic development.

Underlying this analysis, is González's acceptance of the notion of technology as "the younger sister of the Christian faith."<sup>17</sup> The fact that the non-Christian nations reject the Christian faith and accept the Western technology, he holds, ought not to be viewed as a matter for alarm. Because technology and faith find their common roots in creation and redemption, it is possible to affirm that the technology that is finding its way to the non-Christian world is being brought there "by God as a sort of *preparatio evangelica*."<sup>18</sup> This is so because the God who is active in technology also created the Hindu and the Buddhist and is the same God who came into the world in Jesus Christ to redeem all of humanity. Moreover, technology can be thought of as a *preparatio evangelica* because it "involves presuppositions that have emerged from the Christian faith which are . . . absolutely incompatible with the old religions of the world."<sup>19</sup> Technology, then, helps to improve human life, "on the plane of creation," paving the way for "the plane of redemption."<sup>20</sup>

This does not mean, however, that the *preparatio* is equivalent to the evangel. It simply takes one from the realm of creation to that of redemption, "from the subjection to the hidden lordship of God to the plane of confessing the only Name in whom there is redemption."<sup>21</sup>

Mission today requires, therefore, participation and presence in the created world, but this is not in itself what mission is all about. Mission is rather giving "witness to our faith in the creator God who is also redeemer" with the objective of leading men and women to confess Jesus Christ as Lord.

While the end of missions over geographical borders may be in sight, González points out that new "de-Christianized spaces" are appearing all over the world.<sup>22</sup> This poses a new challenge to the

17. *Ibid.*, p. 442.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 445.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, p. 446.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

Christian faith. At the same time, Christians today, as those of yesterday, are encouraged by the promise of God's active presence in the course of human history.

*Perspective.* It is quite evident that the author writes as a Latin American *churchman*. He dedicates almost one third of his work to Latin America. He reveals a special concern for the Christianity of the Latin American Continent, particularly its Protestant variant. This explains the book's threefold objective: (1) to provide an ecumenical (both geographical and confessional) vision of the Christian church; (2) to help the churches of Latin America gain a deeper self-understanding in the light of their heritage and the manifold ways by which the Christian faith has been extended in the course of history; and (3) to confront these churches with the contemporary and future challenges of world mission.<sup>23</sup> In this context, the reader cannot help but notice the way in which the author constantly pinpoints — sometimes going out of his way to do so — specific issues that he perceives as relevant for Latin American Protestantism: *e.g.*, the fallacy of absolutizing missionary methods and ecclesiastical traditions; the varieties of conversion experience recorded in the history of Christianity; the relation between faith and cultural patterns; the danger of Constantinianism; the tension between the individual and the collective in the church and in society; and the maintenance of a balance between flexibility and stability in the life and mission of the church.

González's perception of himself as an *historian* becomes quite clear in the early pages of the book. He sees the history of missions as a chapter of human history. He sees, therefore, the development of Christian missions in the context of general church history and in the light of secular movements and events.

As an historian, he is concerned with verifiable facts. He tries to document carefully his analysis with reliable sources. To this end, he made ample use of the wealth of documentation available at the two libraries at his disposal, namely, those of Yale Divinity School and the SEPR. Even so, these libraries proved to be rather limited in relation to the recent history of Christianity in the lands of the Third World. This accounts for the author's expressed frustration, particularly in relation to the chapters that deal with Latin America, and for

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 27.

his apparent unawareness of several important works on Latin American Christianity which were already or were in the process of being published at about the time in which he was doing his research and writing.<sup>24</sup>

But an historian is not just concerned with the careful documentation of facts about the past. He or she is particularly interested in understanding these facts. This means that he or she must have certain criteria for the interpretation of his or her data. The question, then, is, what is González's historiographical hermeneutic? This is where his role as a theologian becomes particularly relevant.

González writes not only as a churchman and historian, but as a *theologian* with a particular interest in the church's mission. This is why he is so quick to affirm that the "history of the church is the history of its mission," since the church "*is*" mission.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the whole life and growth of the church is caught up in its mission. This means that the church does not exist for itself. Indeed, the church is called to be a community at the service of the world.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, however, it also means that the life and growth of the church is a necessary condition of her service. Without church there is no service and, thus, no mission. Without mission, there is no church, for the church has been called from darkness into light as firstfruits of the coming age, as servant of reconciliation; *i.e.*, the church is missionary by its very nature.

According to González, however, a distinction must be made between mission and missions. Mission has to do with the church's

24. This is especially so in the case of Nelson's *History of Protestantism in Costa Rica* (1963); the first edition of Dussel's *Historia*, which appeared in 1967 under the title *Hipótesis para una historia de la iglesia en América Latina*; Kessler's *Perú and Chile* (1967); and Willems, *Followers* (1967). Lalive D'Epinay's study was not published until 1969, but the results of the study were already being made available in at least one article in 1965 (Cf. Christian Lalive D'Epinay, "La expansión protestante en Chile," in *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, No. 9-10 (1965-66).) Neither does he seem to be aware of Donald A. McGavran, "A Study of the Life and Growth of the Disciples of Christ in Puerto Rico" (Indianapolis: United Christian Missionary Society, 1956), (mimeographed); William R. Read, *New Patterns of Church Growth in Brazil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), nor of the wealth of information compiled from 1966-67 by the Church Growth in Latin American research team and published in early 1969 by Eerdmans.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

total service in and to the world as a sign of God's purpose. Missions is one part of the whole; it has to do with the church's proclaiming witness before the "whole human race."<sup>27</sup> The ultimate objective of mission is to lead the entire human race to confess Christ as Lord. Missions are concerned with the specificity of this goal, while mission deals with the church's service in and to the world.

This distinction makes it possible for González to limit his story to the ways in which the faith has reached different parts of the world. This explains why he gives so much attention to the geographical expansion of Christianity, to patterns of conversion and missionary methods and allocates relatively little space to missionary theory and strategy, the theological and socio-cultural context of the missionary enterprise and the impact of church and society upon each other.

The author's account of the expansion of Christianity is determined not only by the distinction mentioned above, but also by his understanding of the Christian faith. It is no accident that he has chosen to start with a reference to its origins as recorded in Scripture, its concept of mission and the account of its early expansion. For therein lies his fundamental presupposition: that the history of Christian missions begins with the end of history, namely, the advent of Jesus Christ. In him, history finds its fulfillment. He is the point of departure and goal of the missionary enterprise and the center of its message. He is the fulfillment of God's purpose in creation and the anticipation of the consummation of all things.

As a creature of time and space, however, the theologian is affected by the burning issues of his day. The way he interprets his own history greatly affects his interpretation of the faith and its development. This is why González's concluding chapter is so pertinent to his interpretation of Christianity and the history of missions: it shows how he reads "the signs" of his time.

By singling out technology as the fundamental criterion for the analysis of the contemporary crisis of mission, González has placed himself in the camp of such North Atlantic theologians as Arend Th. van Leeuwen who has seen in technology the offspring of the Christian faith and has underlined its prophetic role in human history.<sup>18</sup>

27. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

28. Arend Th. van Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History* (London: Edinburgh House, 1964), especially pp. 400ff. See also, among others, Harvey Cox,

He has seen technology as a sign of hope for a better tomorrow because of its capacity to improve the quality of human life and its ability to break open closed (ontocratic) societies. With van Leeuwen, González sees the hand of Christ behind the technological advances of the Western world and the impact which this is having upon the Third World. Inasmuch as it represents the fulfillment of creation, González argues, the impact of technology upon the developing nations constitutes a latent preparation for the acceptance of the Christian faith.

### *Evaluation*

*Positive aspects.* This is without doubt one of the most significant works published by a Latin American Protestant during the period of our study. Its importance is eminently evident.

First, it gives a comprehensive picture of the history of the missionary movement. For a church that is the offspring of the last 100 years of that Movement and which still lives under the influence of its major institutions and presuppositions, a work of this nature cannot but be considered a milestone. Indeed, it demythologizes several assumptions and positions which have influenced the thinking and attitude of the various Protestant churches and groups of the Continent in the course of their history.

One such assumption is the idea that between the first 400 years of Christian history and the Protestant Reformation mission work was practically halted. It is often argued that after the Edict of Milan Christianity fell progressively into such apostasy that it eventually lost all interest in sharing the gospel with the non-Christian world. Only a faithful remnant kept the true faith and spread it here and there against a hostile environment.

González shows — as have other scholars before him — that it was quite the contrary. As far back as the 7th century, Nestorian Christianity had penetrated deep into Central Asia and held its own for more than two hundred years. Between the 5th and 14th centuries practically the whole of the British isles, northern and central Europe, Scandinavia, Russia and the Balkans had come under the influ-

*The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan, 1965); Robert L. Richard, *Secularization Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967); R. Adolfs, *La tumba de Dios* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Carlos Lohlé, 1967); L. Shier, *The Secularization of History* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966).

ence of Christianity. In Southeastern Europe and in what is now the Middle East, the church held steady to the faith throughout the period of Islamic domination. The Franciscan and Dominican movements of the 12th and 13th centuries left an impressive missionary record, the former having made possible the second penetration into China. For several and varied reasons the Reformation was very slow in responding to the challenge of the non-Christian world. It was not until more than a 100 years after the Reformation that Protestants began to show a real, definitive concern for the evangelization of the world.

The author also helps demythologize the notion that conversion is only possible through individual decisions. He shows how as far back as the missionary movement of the NT period the task of evangelization has been linked with clusters of people (cf. the *panta ethnè* of Mt. 28:19) rather than with isolated individuals, and how the practice of collective decisions has been more the rule than the exception in an overwhelming number of cases. Such information should provoke serious thought in churches which have a highly individualistic understanding of evangelism.

Then there is the double assumption that missiology was first developed by Protestants and that it is a recent field of study. While it is widely recognized that the first great systematization of mission theory was undertaken by a Protestant (Warneck), González points out that long before Protestants had begun to reflect critically on the meaning and place of mission, Roman Catholics were producing works on this subject; e.g. Aquinas (*Summa Contra Gentiles*), Francisco de Vitoria (1480-1546), José de Acosta (1529-1600) and Bartolomé de las Casas (1474-1566).

A fourth assumption that was partly exposed in the second chapter of this study is that the missionary enterprise, especially the Protestant one, took its rise from purely spiritual motives. González strongly underscores, to be sure, the labor of love and sacrifice that has characterized many missionaries and their sending partners. But he also brings out the economic and political interests that have accompanied many a missionary effort, the seemingly inevitable presence of European and North American messianism in the work of individual missionaries and their respective societies, and the damaging impact which this has had upon the peoples of the Third World.

Finally, González demythologizes the assumption of many, inside and outside of Latin America, that continental Protestants have only been objects and not subjects of the missionary movement. He demonstrates that Protestant missionary work in the Dominican Republic was initiated by the efforts of Puerto Rican churches. He points out, moreover, that Puerto Rican Pentecostals have been the protagonists of a dynamic missionary movement, sending missionaries into many countries of Latin America and Spain. Chilean Pentecostals have also extended their work across the Chilean frontier into Perú, Bolivia and Argentina. In Cuba, Protestant work was first undertaken by Cubans who had been forced to migrate to the USA during the latter part of the 19th century and had been converted while in exile.<sup>29</sup>

The material with which *Misiones* confronts Latin Americans reveals the wider context of the Christian world mission. It shows that the history of Christianity is much more comprehensive, much more complicated, much more dynamic and richer than the various versions of Catholicism and Protestantism that have either been planted from the outside or have emerged from within. For a continent that in spite of its common, yet pluralistic heritage and situation has tended to place the national against the continental, the particular against the universal and the personal against the collective, this is an important, indeed a desperately needed, corrective.

In the second place, this work represents a Latin American Protestant contribution to the general field of missiology. As such, it is not only significant for Latin America but for other continents as well. That in the time since it was published it has failed to arouse the attention of the professionals in the field, may be attributed to the bibliographical provincialism which, unfortunately, still characterizes too many professional missiologists around the world, trained to read and to do research in English, German and French, but who are

29. It is unfortunate that González misses one of the most startling facts of Protestantism in the Caribbean region, namely, the pioneer work undertaken in the 1830's by the Jamaican Baptist Churches in West Cameroon. (Cf. Lloyd E. Kwart, *The Discipling of West Cameroon: A Study of Baptist Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968).) More disappointing still is the fact that all of his references to the Caribbean are to its Spanish and French speaking countries (and of the latter only Haiti is mentioned). For a work that attempts to give a comprehensive introduction to the history of the world-wide missionary movement this omission is surprising indeed.

ignorant of Spanish and Portuguese and the literary resources available in these languages.

In *Misiones*, González has verified what Stephen Neill proved in 1964 in the publication of his *A History of Christian Missions*,<sup>30</sup> namely, that it is possible to write a comprehensive history of missions in a single volume. In a sense, the book condenses into one volume Kenneth Scott Latourette's monumental work, *History of the Expansion of Christianity*.<sup>31</sup> González follows Latourette's periodization fairly closely,<sup>32</sup> but selects and organizes his material according to his own research criteria, zeroing on those issues and regions that appear to bear more relationship to his purpose. He admits his indebtedness to Latourette,<sup>33</sup> but proves to be an historian on his own merits, well-read and familiar with the primary sources. Above all, he writes as one who is a direct offspring of the missionary movement.

Thirdly, his emphasis on the centrality of mission in the life of the church merits recognition. He is not, of course, the first Latin American so to emphasize the role of mission in the church. He is, nevertheless, the first Protestant to show how mission has been at the very heart of the church in the course of its history. If the history of the church is indeed the history of its mission, then it follows that the present and future history of the church in Latin America will be judged by its missionary obedience. González fulfills a prophetic function in confronting the church with the need to evaluate its missionary performance and discover its specific responsibility for the present hour.

At the same time, González calls attention to the centrality of history in mission. He contends, rightly, that mission does not take place outside the challenges and problems of history. It *always* takes place at the crossroads of life. It moves from one crisis to another. The church must never be frightened by situations of conflict, but rather work with an eye to God's promise, as a sign of God's active redemptive presence in the world and the firstfruits of the coming

30. Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1964).

31. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 7 Vols. (New York: Harper, 1937-45).

32. Cf. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. x.

33. *Misiones*, pp. 20, 21.



kingdom. Mission takes place, accordingly, in the midst of the heat and battles of history.

*Critical aspects.* We must note, however, not only the positive aspects of the book, but also its weaknesses. The purpose of the critical observations that follow is not to neutralize what has already been said, or to minimize the relevance of González's study. Their goal is rather interaction with his fundamental theses in order to help clarify the issues which he raises and/or call attention to those that in my judgment he leaves out. The following comments are thus offered in the spirit of a fellow traveler who shares the author's concern that Protestants understand more fully the meaning of their missionary vocation in the crossroads of contemporary Latin America.

The first critical problem that must be underscored is that of *communication*. It has been said that González wishes to give an introductory survey to the field and that he is primarily addressing himself to the church. One cannot help but be surprised, then, with the way he assumes the reader's knowledge of such controversies and heretical movements as Arianism, Monophysitism and Nestorianism. It would almost seem as if he expected the reader to have read his earlier work on the history of Christian thought! A brief account or definition of these and other controversies and technical terms would have improved the communicability of the book.

One notes a similar problem in reference to the author's account of the encounter of Christianity with such religions as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism, to mention just those that are referred to most frequently. Very little is said with respect to their beliefs and origins; nor are their basic differences and the fundamental issues that they raise for the Christian faith clearly delineated -- not even in outline form.

There is also a tendency to follow the chronological development of Christianity without noting major dates. Though the reader is conscious of the general period being discussed, she or he cannot help but be frustrated by the lack of specific chronological references, especially throughout the first five chapters of the book.

The second critical problem has been already touched upon in the analysis of the author's *perspective*. Though his geographical, cultural and church background is quite evident throughout the book, González's social, economic and political context is less obvious, though this comes through somewhat in his mild denunciation of the institu-

tion of racism, the cultural imperialism of some missionaries and the vested economico-political interest that accompanied -- consciously or unconsciously -- some of the pioneer missionary efforts. It is also noticeable in the connection that he tries to show between the problem of church-state relationships at the time of Constantine and the situation today. According to him, we are witnessing in the 20th century "an inverse process in the life of states."<sup>34</sup> Whereas in the Constantinian age it was the state that joined the church, in many contemporary situations it is the church, or groups of Christians, who seem to be wanting to join the state -- an obvious reference to the insistence of many Latin American Christians on participating in the struggle for a new order as evidence of their commitment to the cause of Christ.

In the end, one cannot help but wonder whether the author has allowed himself to be truly confronted with the concrete, objective and global reality of the Third World in general and Latin America in particular; one questions to what extent he has succeeded in placing himself *inside* the world of the disenfranchised. How far have his own personal frustrations as a Cuban expatriate inhibited him from effectively identifying with the oppressive situation of the exploited masses of the world? And to what extent has his North American and European training kept him from looking at the history of Christianity from within the concrete situation of the oppressed majorities?

This latter question is crucial given González's assumption of the optic of technology for his reading of the missionary situation in the contemporary world. The contention that because of its supposedly Christian presuppositions and positive contribution to the improvement of the quality of life in the developing nations technology has served a useful missionary role is a thesis that has been questioned in recent years by voices from the Third World. Two examples will suffice, from Latin America and Africa respectively.

In his provocative book, *A Theology of Human Hope*, Rubem Alves has criticized van Leeuwen, Cox and other secular theologians of the 60's for their optimistic view of technology. He argues that such optimism loses sight of the fact that technology has not been simply an instrument at the service of humanity but also a means of

34. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

enslavement and exploitation. Technology, he says, has become "technologism," an absurd and alienating ideology that proposes the liberation of humanity by means of its domestication. It is a means of destroying the disenfranchised's ability to negate their situation of oppression by delivering goods which commit them to a neo-colonial system. Moreover, it is a way of narrowing future hope to a system of production and consumption, limiting thereby the capacity of the oppressed to create their own history. Beyond this, it makes people feel impotent, since the machine takes over their duties.<sup>35</sup>

Theologians like van Leeuwen, says Alves, are right in asserting that technological development is the fruit of "the historical impetus of biblical faith."<sup>36</sup> In this sense, it has to be admitted that technology has stimulated the human quest for freedom. But if this is true, he adds, it is no less true that "like Saturn, it devoured its own child."<sup>37</sup>

For his part, E. C. O. Ilogu, in his study, *Christian Ethics in An African Background*, has criticized the apostles of technologism (especially van Leeuwen) for their tendency to identify Western Civilization with Christianity. He states that in the Ibo society of Eastern Nigeria "Christianity is being rejected precisely by those who see this identification as neo-colonialism. . ."<sup>38</sup> He questions, moreover, the uncritical association of the so-called "ontocratic" world view with evil, backwardness and narrowness. He holds that such a rash value judgment is in itself the product of the imprisonment of the Western mind by the ideology of technologism. As a matter of fact, the recent quest for "a theology of nature" that has followed Western society's awareness of the damaging effects of technology upon the environment seems to be indicating a reconsideration of the traditional Western approach to the things of creation. In this respect, it is the Western world that has to learn from other societies as to how to reestablish "the close link between nature and spirit."<sup>39</sup> Ilogu adds:

35. Alves, *Hope*, pp. 21-27. See also, by the same author, *O Enigma da Religião* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1975), pp. 150-169.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

38. E. C. O. Ilogu, *Christian Ethics in An African Background* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), p. 178.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 179. Alves makes a similar point in a recent article. Cf. Rubem Alves, "Identity and Communication," *WACC Journal*, XIII:4 (1975), pp. 8-9.

van Leeuwen, like any discoverer of an aspect of truth, namely, the effect of biblical faith's destruction of religious belief that regarded nature as the external manifestation of the Godhead, which to deeply change or tamper with would evoke the wrath of the gods, in his enthusiasm, oversimplified the nature of the relationship between man and nature.<sup>40</sup>

By using the parameter of the Western theological discourse of the mid 60's in his evaluation of the state of world mission, Justo L. González has in reality let down the very people to whom, for whom and in whose name he writes as a voice from the Third World! His misplaced perspective leads, in my opinion, to an analytical vacuum which in spite of the aforementioned insistence on the centrality of history in the church's mission, ends up, in fact, placing missions in a peripheral position.

The third critical problem, then, is that of analysis. It stems, fundamentally, from the lack of clear historico-cultural hermeneutical criteria. To be sure, González is conscious of the role of non-theological factors in the missionary process. He does not seem to take sufficiently seriously, however, their hermeneutical significance. This is why he can begin his story with a reference to the remotest past of the Christian world mission without previously setting forth the contextual framework out of which he is to interpret the history of Christianity.

But is it possible to take such a leap backward? Can one undertake the reading of the past without an awareness of the burdens of the present? Can the church's historical past be properly analyzed without a clear understanding of its present context?

One of the gravest problems of *Misiones* is the fact that it does not take into account the historico-cultural setting from which is written. It does not take notice of what Dussel has referred to as those "certain theological moments that play a central role in the contemporary reflection of Latin America"<sup>41</sup> and which must be taken into account in any analysis of the history of Christianity that wishes to be relevant and meaningful to the concrete Latin American situation. Dussel defines these moments as the understanding of (1) faith in praxis and the concomitant qualitative difference between Christian and non-Christian praxis; (2) the intrinsic relationship be-

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 179, 180.

41. Dussel, *Historia*, p. 2.

tween the theory of faith (theology) and history; and (3) the Christian's being-in-the-world as an efficacious being-with-others.<sup>42</sup> Such a consideration requires an understanding of what it means to be a Christian in contemporary Latin America, the nature of Latin American culture and the levels of relations between the historic Christianity and Latin American culture. Only to the extent that these moments are clearly, even if briefly, delineated can the reading of the past, recent and distant, help the Latin American church to come to grips with its heritage, learn from both the mistakes and achievements of its forefathers, deal critically with the present and turn toward the future.

In this connection, it is significant to note the similarities and contrasts between Dussel's *Historia de la Iglesia en América Latina* and González's *Misiones*. Both are meant to be historical introductions. Both are interested in confronting the church with its past heritage as well as its present and future challenge. Both have a missiological concern. Both are written in an ecumenical spirit. But whereas Dussel begins with a hermeneutical introduction along the lines outlined above, González does not. In so doing, Dussel has been able to undertake a clearly defined Latin American analysis of the history of Christianity in the Continent. González, in turn, by failing to put his work within a Latin American historico-cultural framework, has, in my opinion, lessened the value of *Misiones*.<sup>43</sup> For Christian history can be really meaningful if there is an awareness of the contemporary faith, its historico-cultural context and its praxeological engagement. To attempt to study the history of Christianity with any other frame of reference is to cripple its critical, dynamic potential.

To the problems of communication perspective and analysis we must now add that of *mission theory*. This problem, like the others, has several aspects. It deals, first of all, with the author's distinction between missions and mission. In differentiating between the plural and the singular, González wanted to clarify the relevance of the

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 20ff.

43. It could be argued, of course, that Dussel's work deals specifically with the history of Christianity in Latin America while González's has to do with world Christianity. The point of my argument, however, does not lie on the subject matter but on their respective starting points and the way in which each interprets church history.

geographical expansion of the gospel for the total mission of the church. He feels that with the contemporary emphasis on the wholeness of mission, the geographical extension of the church has been "relegated to a second place and at times [it has] even been thought of as a rival of *mission*."<sup>44</sup>

González's concern is commendable. But his theoretical scheme is open to serious criticism, for it ends up reducing the deeply missiolo-gical nature of the spread of the faith. There is more to the latter than the mere act of crossing geographical frontiers. There are the variables of message, culture, resources, methods, language, ideology, other religions, ethics, politics, economics and social structures — all fundamental in the communication of the gospel. It is impossible, therefore, to separate the particular from the total, as González — albeit unconsciously — ends up doing.

He recognizes, of course, that the missionary expansion of the church does not take place in isolation from theological and non-theological factors. He is also aware of the fact that the planting of the church involves the simultaneous presence of such other dimensions of its task as liturgy, nurture and service. What he fails to note is that precisely for these reasons one cannot separate the latter from evangelism without truncating mission.

There is, nevertheless, a point to González's insistence on differentiating between the spread of the faith and the overall life of the church. This distinction, however, cannot be located in the realm of the geographical. It is not the crossing of *geographical* frontiers that distinguishes mission from the rest of the life of the church. The differentiation between the two lies rather on the twofold notion, referred to in Chapter I, of mission as a comprehensive event, encompassing the whole life of the church, and mission as a specific moment, involving the crossing of the *personal, spiritual* frontiers of the world with the gospel.

Nevertheless, to say that missions have *only* to do with the penetration of the gospel into the personal, spiritual boundaries of the world is to truncate both the meaning of mission and of all of its constituent parts. For mission has to do with God's redemptive concern for the world, which encompasses the totality of life. It involves the specific, yet comprehensive communication of the arrival of a

44. *Misiones*, p. 19.

new age in the person of Jesus Christ. This reality constitutes the center of everything the church does: preaching, teaching, serving and fellowshiping. These are all means by which the gospel is communicated in and to the world. They all need one another, each points to the other, none is complete without the other and all find their sole meaning and significance in the gospel and in its ongoing historical incarnation in the miracle of the witnessing, worshipping, growing, serving community. Accordingly, these activities of the church can be designated as missions<sup>45</sup> inasmuch as they are ways by which the church fulfills its responsibility as a community sent out to be an agent of God's redemptive mission in the world. There are then many different types of missions in the church. Some are kerygmatic in nature; others are educational, liturgical or diaconal. Since they are all carried out in time and space, they are all geographical and socio-cultural in scope.

A second aspect of the theoretical problem has to do with González's tendency to minimize the importance of strategy in missionary theory and action. He rejects the idea that early apostolic missions had a clear missionary strategy, but does not hesitate to point out their eschatological vision, the way it affected their work and the different methods they used. Elsewhere in the book he is on the look out for missionary methods, resources and, to a lesser extent, goals, but not for the overall strategy to which they respond. He thus rejects the notion of strategy, on the one hand, and accepts it, on the other, by incorporating into his theoretical scheme the fundamental components of this notion. He is apparently unaware of the fact that the concept of strategy encompasses both means and ends, that all action presupposes a theory and that without a strategy there cannot be a theory of praxis.<sup>46</sup>

There is also González's tendency to place the personal against the collective. Time and again he points to the fact of the conversion and Christianization of entire tribes and nations. He criticizes the pietists for their excessive emphasis on personal conversion and for their

45. Cf. Johannes Aagaard, "Trends in Missiological Thinking During the Sixties," *International Review of Mission*, LXII:245 (January, 1973), 8-25.

46. For two relevant but opposite discussions on the question of strategy in the church, see Jean Giscard, *Iglesia, lucha de clases y estrategias políticas* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1973), pp. 75ff.; C. Peter Wagner, *Frontiers in Mission Strategy* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), *passim*.

insensitivity to a phenomenon that can be traced as far back as the Apostle Paul, who thought of his eschatological mission in terms of nations rather than of individual persons. But González fails to explain why the NT places so much emphasis on personal confession, or why in so many cases mass conversions turned out to be extremely superficial. Is it not that there is an inseparable relation between the personal and the collective, that a personal decision for Christ implies the commitment of all the components of the believer's personality, including those who have to do with his or her historico-cultural context, and that, likewise, the conversion of entire groups requires the continuous disciplining of *each* of its members?

This brings us to González's failure to differentiate clearly between such concepts and/or phenomena as Christianization and evangelization and Christianity and Christendom. Christianization may involve evangelization, but often it does not. For example, Latin America can be said to have been Christianized by the Spanish and Portuguese, but it was not really evangelized. For evangelization is not a mere historico-sociological process whereby people of other faiths are brought within the bounds of the Christian church. Evangelization is rather the sharing of the gospel of the kingdom of God with those who have not heard, in such a way that they are not only able to understand it, but are led to accept it and incorporate it into their lives through faith in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. By the same token, Christendom, though a historico-cultural product of Christianity, cannot be equated with it. For while Christianity is that religious faith which is grounded on the belief of Jesus as Lord and Saviour, Christendom is the notion of a Christian society centered on the Christian church and oriented by a set of supposedly Christian principles and values.<sup>47</sup>

The differentiation between these concepts and/or phenomena is of fundamental importance for a proper understanding of the development of the Christian faith in Latin America. Indeed, without such distinction it is impossible to explain why after so many centuries of missionary work many millions remain outside the faith, or why it is that the plight of the masses seems to get worse rather than better, or

47. Cf. Enrique Dussel, *Caminos de liberación latinoamericana*, I: *Teología de la liberación e historia* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Latinoamérica Libros, 1972), pp. 57-68; Cf. Juan Luis Segundo, *Teología abierta para el laico adulto*, Vol. I: *Esa comunidad llamada iglesia* (Buenos Aires: Carlos Lohlé, 1967), pp. 73ff.



why it is so hard to recognize the true face of "that community that is called the church."<sup>48</sup>

In spite of these critical remarks, *Historia de las misiones* remains an important contribution to Mainline Protestant missiology in the period of our study. Its emphasis on the ecumenical reality of the church and its mission, the plurality of missionary traditions and styles and the common needs and challenges confronting the church in Asia and the South Pacific, Africa and Madagascar and Latin America and the Caribbean help to deepen and broaden the self understanding of Protestants in general and Mainliners in particular. Beyond this, it provides a new missiological model for Latin American Protestants, namely: the critical reflection on the praxis of mission via the history of the expansion of the Christian faith.

### EMILIO CASTRO, *HACIA UNA PASTORAL LATINOAMERICANA*

A second contribution to the quest for missiological depth in Mainline Protestantism is that of Emilio Castro's *Hacia una pastoral latinoamericana*. If González has given a historical missiological model, Castro has offered a pastoral one. His book constitutes not only a significant step in the development of an autochthonous Latin American Protestant pastoral theology but also a unique moment in the reflection on the meaning of mission in contemporary Latin America.

#### *Biography*

In previous chapters, we have had occasion to interact with Castro's thought, especially in his role as former General Secretary of UNELAM. We must now turn to other aspects of his life and ministry.

Emilio Castro is an Uruguayan Methodist pastor. He received his theological training at Union Theological Seminary, Buenos Aires, Argentina (today ISEDET), and the University of Basel, under the guidance of Karl Barth. He has held pastorates in Argentina, Bolivia and Uruguay and served for many years as President of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Uruguay (IEMU). Simultaneously with his church responsibilities he held first the post of Executive Secretary

48. *Ibid.*, See also Dussel, *Historia*, pp. 53-147; *Caminos*, I., pp. 71-103.

of ASIT and later that of General Secretary of UNELAM. In addition, he has been entrusted with numerous responsibilities in committees and programs related to world Methodism and the Ecumenical Movement. Since 1973, he has been serving as Director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC.

He has traveled widely in every continent, lecturing in many theological institutions. He has participated in the major ecumenical conferences of the last 15 years, has contributed numerous articles to international journals and magazines and has served as a contributing editor of *The Christian Century*. He is currently editor of the *International Review of Mission*.

In Latin America, Castro is known for his dynamic ecumenical leadership, preaching ministry, dedication to Jesus Christ and his church and commitment to the integral liberation of his fellow human beings. His writings,<sup>49</sup> sermons and lectures are highlighted by their biblical faithfulness, socio-historical realism, evangelical conviction and spiritual vitality.

### *Analysis*

*Context.* The work in consideration is a reproduction of the Harry Strachan lectures, delivered in April 1972 at the SBL in San José, Costa Rica. It was edited and published by the department of publications of INDEPTH and was distributed by Editorial Caribe. These three institutions are founding members of CLAME and dependencies of the former Latin America Mission, founded by Harry Strachan and his wife, Susanna, and led after their death by their son R. Kenneth Strachan.

The CLAME complex represents one of the main centers of Evangelical-Protestantism in Latin America. Castro's invitation to deliver the lectureship series, set up in memory of CLAME's spiritual father and founder of the SBL, and their subsequent publication by INDEPTH cannot but be regarded as very special moments in Latin American Protestantism. Indeed, the delivery of these lectures represents one of those bridge-building situations referred to in the previous chapter. For Castro himself it was a very significant occasion inasmuch as he had been the target of unfair criticism from certain Evangelical-Protestant quarters ever since his appointment as General

49. Cf. the bibliography at the end of this work.

Secretary of UNELAM. At the very least the occasion gave him a respectable Evangelical platform from which to give a coherent account of his theological thought, including his vision of the church and its mission in present-day Latin America. It also represented public recognition of Castro as a brother in Christ and a responsible and trustworthy leader of the church.

The lectures were highlighted by a most difficult experience in Castro's ministry. Two weeks before, while away on an extended trip which would eventually bring him to Costa Rica, eight members of the Tupamaro (guerrilla) Movement seized one of the buildings of the Central Methodist Church of Montevideo, of which Castro had been pastor for many years. During their occupation of that building, they killed a former Under Secretary of Uruguay's Ministry of the Interior. Shortly thereafter in a radio broadcast a rightist group accused several sectors of society for what had happened, including Emilio Castro, who, according to them, "had offered his parish for the fulfillment of this wicked crime..."<sup>50</sup> This was followed by numerous threats on the life of Castro, his family and against the IEMU. The following day, the Church's Executive Council produced a declaration categorically repudiating the use of its facilities for the execution of a crime, reiterating its "pacifistic position" and calling, at the same time, for the governmental authorities to put an end to the causes behind the state of permanent violence in the country.

That very morning a powerful bomb was detonated, in reprisal, in the front door of the Central Church. The Executive Council of the IEMU immediately issued another statement repudiating the unjust act and expressing the Church's determination to continue to work "without rancor or animosity" toward national reconciliation. The threats on Castro's life, his family and the Central Church's pastor, Ilda Vance, continued. In view of the situation, the Executive Council published a third statement defending the integrity of its President.

These events took place while Castro was in Lima, Perú attending the annual meeting of UNELAM's Board. Prior to that, he had been lecturing at Princeton Theological Seminary in the USA. From Lima, he wrote a pastoral letter which was read on April 30th in all of the

50. "Noticiero desde Uruguay," *Boletín de ALET*, IV:1,2 (mayo-agosto de 1972), 7.

Methodist congregations of the country. Given its significance, I quote the following excerpts:

My dear ones:

You can all imagine how we have followed the Uruguayan events through the Peruvian press: in prayer and hope. I think with deep sadness on the mourning of so many homes over this fratricidal struggle. This is not the way. We must continue the search to create the instruments of peaceful change, no matter how difficult it might seem. We must not yield to despair or to nihilistic voices; we must look with genuine hope to the tomorrow for which all of us have dreamed.

The events that took place on the premises of the Central Church, lamentable as they are, remind us of a profound dimension of the gospel: participation in the sufferings of society. It is horrifying that a church building be used for a murder; it hurts that any one could believe in the complicity of the Church in a crime.

It reminds us of the ambiguity of the human situation. The Church shares that ambiguity; she is torn by division; she does not quite know what to believe.

This is the moment to live by faith, assuming our share of the national grief, maintaining our equanimity, not repaying evil for evil, working not from fear but from hope.

May the measure of grief that might reach us that is already reaching us be used redemptively, as our offering of reconciliation for the future of the country. . . . It pays to live for love, for service and to assume our vocation in spite of misinterpretations and risks.

Let us follow the way of love, live in peace, be open to the future and trust in the divine wisdom, which is capable of using our success or failure, joy or pain, in healing for our neighbor.

Emilio Castro<sup>51</sup>

Such was Castro's situation at the time of his arrival in San José. The concern over the well-being of his loved ones, the uncertainty as to whether the government authorities would allow him to reenter the country, the heavy burden of the brokenness and suffering of the entire Uruguayan society were present with him throughout the week of April 22-28, 1972 as a cloud that overshadowed every lecture, every discussion and conversation, every moment of solitude. For the faculty and student body of the SBL, the staff of the other

51. Emilio Castro, "Carta abierta del Presidente de la Iglesia Evangélica Metodista en el Uruguay," Montevideo, 28 de abril de 1972, *Ibid.*, p. 13.

sister institutions and the larger Costa Rican Protestant community this was a moment of intense supplication and solidarity. It was, in short, a very profoundly human and Christian context which gave origin to *Hacia una pastoral latinoamericana*.

*Structure.* The book contains two sets of materials. The major part consists of the seven Strachan Lectures. Two additional lectures, delivered respectively at the University of Costa Rica and the SBL's regular course on systematic theology, were added as appendices. Our primary concern is, of course, with the main lectures, although there will be occasional references to the other two.

Castro's Strachan Lectures fall neatly into two major sections. The first section deals with theological foundations. It covers the first three chapters. In chapter one, Castro poses the question of an indigenous, Latin American pastoral theology. He analyzes in chapter two the need of an indigenous pastoral style and dedicates chapter three to the problem of interpreting God's *kairos* in contemporary Latin America.

The second section deals with three permanent areas of pastoral service, namely, worship, evangelization and pastoral care, the latter being subdivided into two parts. This section covers therefore four chapters. If in the first three chapters Castro lays the theological foundations for a Latin American pastoral theology, in the second he works out its consequences for the pastoral practice.

*Summary.* Castro's starting argument is that while it is too early to write a normative pastoral theology for Latin America, the time is ripe for the church to start reflecting, searching and experimenting on the type and quality of pastoral leadership that the contemporary historical moment demands. He thus lays the foundations for a Protestant pastoral theology in the light of the complex problems and opportunities before Latin American society. He holds that the greatest service that the church can render to the process of change in the various countries of the Continent is to motivate and enable the faithful to participate in the communal process that searches for ways to escape the present situation of dependence and oppression.

Within this frame of reference, Castro asks whether it is possible to have a pastoral theology with a distinctive cultural-geographical reference. He answers affirmatively, provided that such a theology is patterned after the pastoral model of Jesus Christ, and is oriented to the church's mission in the world. In Jesus Christ, we have an authen-

tic pastor, always concerned for the concrete, for the personal as well as the collective, the whole and the particular. But since he lived and ministered in a specific situation, those that are to follow his pastoral example will always be confronted with the problem of how to actualize his model in their own concrete life situations. Beyond that, the Bible reminds us that the pastoral ministry is not an end but a means at the service of the church's mission. To ask about the pastoral task is to be confronted with the church's mission, which is, in turn, at the service of God's redemptive mission in the world. Pastoral theology is thus grounded on missiology.

For Castro, God's mission is defined by the continuous invitation of all human beings at all times and in every circumstance to a new life as set forth in the gospel. This invitation takes different forms, corresponding to the particular circumstances of the hour. The church is called to be at the service of this mission. As such, she has a specific task and vocation which corresponds to the circumstances of every generation. The pastor is given to the church to motivate, train and lead her in the fulfillment of its mission. Just as there are specific moments in the life of the church, so there are different styles of pastoral leadership.

The problem, then, is threefold: (1) to discover God's *kairos* in Latin America; (2) to find out in what measure the church's mission is corresponding to God's action; and (3) to determine the extent to which the pastoral ministry has been placed at the service of the church. This requires an understanding of the different pastoral models in Latin America and their corresponding view of the church as well as a prophetic reading of the contemporary situation.

Castro suggests three pastoral models which can be identified in the historical development of Latin American Protestantism. They are: (1) the paternalistic or authoritarian model of the pioneer missionaries, reinforced by the *hacienda* system and early Roman Catholic clericalism; (2) the religious professional; and (3) the football player-coach. These pastoral models correspond to three different images of the congregation: as the center of the believer's activities; as a voluntary society; as a team.

Castro conceives of the pastoral task in terms of the third model. Consequently, he holds that the pastor is constantly charged with the responsibility of analyzing the whole of his or her pastoral vocation in the light of God's *kairos* and with that of equipping his or her parishioners for the work of ministry.

The problem is how to read God's moment for Latin America. He suggests a twofold criterion. There is first the criterion of biblical hermeneutics. He inquires into God's work in biblical history via such concepts as the "poor," "justice" and "children," and of such episodes like the call and life of Abraham, the Exodus and Babylon (captivity and liberation), the life and ministry of Christ, and, above all, in light of the global view of salvation history. He concludes that the God of the Bible is actively involved in the events of history, liberating the destitute and oppressed.

Castro's second criterion is empirico-theological. He observes the continental reality of oppression, suffering, agitation and repression, on the one hand, and the search for liberation, on the other. He thus asks, how are Christians to read these events? Are they to read them "with the horror of one who asks for the reestablishment of law and order in the name of a sacred authority that cannot be challenged?" Or are they to read them "as the groaning in travail that announces a new day and as part of the tragedy of those plagues that fell upon Egypt, a people which was also loved by God and formed the object of his love?"<sup>52</sup> He takes note of the signs of renewal in the RCC, of an emerging national consciousness on the part of Protestant churches and of the strong Pentecostal presence among the proletariat of the Continent, pointing to each as evidence of a new day in the religious history of Latin America.

Hence, he interprets the situation of 1972 as an invitation from God to the people of Latin America to search for new possibilities for human life. This being so, the church should be at the service of the process of change that is witnessed all around, helping it not to lose its track, humanizing it to the utmost, enabling the faithful to assume responsible roles in decision-making centers and pointing out to all men and women "that the promise envisioned in the pilgrimage toward a new style of human life is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. . ."<sup>53</sup>

It is within this framework that the Latin American pastor is called to interpret his or her ministry. This is especially important in relation to the "permanent" tasks of the church: worship, evangelization and pastoral care.

52. Castro, *Pastoral*, p. 55.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Worship, says Castro, lies at the very heart of the church's life. It is an encounter with God through his Spirit, the gathering of the church in the name of Christ to share in love with one another, to experience him anew, to bring before him all of the community's concern, to celebrate his action in history and to be confronted by his word. Each part of the service should reflect the context of the worshipping community, focus on God's active involvement in history and emphasize the church's service in the world as well as the burdens and frustrations, the joys and hopes of each believer. He contends that rather than being an alienating opium, as Marxist critics have often asserted, the church's worship is a participatory event of profound political implications.

Turning to the field of evangelization, the author goes on to state that the call to human liberation does not mean the end of the church's evangelistic responsibility. By evangelization he does not mean proselytism, but rather the proclamation of God's liberating act in Jesus Christ and his continued liberating work through the Spirit in the course of human history, the invitation to become a disciple of Christ and the subsequent incorporation into a liberating, worshipping community. It is precisely for this reason that the evangelistic message needs always to be supported by the commitment and engagement of the Christian community. Such engagement of the believing community in the historical struggle for justice and liberation will open new evangelistic situations. Castro suggests that from the start the gospel that is shared with the world should be presented in its fulness rather than in parts, and be addressed to society as a whole. Understood thus the task of evangelization constitutes a fundamental service to the liberating process of Latin America. For it means the recruitment of persons to a militant discipleship with a higher motivation than mere self-interest, and a preparation of persons with sufficient inner strength for the critical moments which are being experienced already by Latin American society.

The pastor is not only called to lead the congregation in a worship that springs from the depth of its human situation and in a militant evangelistic engagement, but also to care for the personal, spiritual well-being of the parishoners. It is necessary that the pastor see them as concrete persons, understanding them in their particular context, helping to clarify their inner attitudes and exposing them to God's liberating action in history so as to enable them to act responsibly



in society. These things are especially applicable in such intensely personal situations as marriage and death, illness and old age. The pastor should be careful that they do not degenerate into a privatistic, escapist course. Rather he or she should orient these moments in the direction of God's call to participate in his redemptive action in the world.

Besides being called to serve the congregation, the pastor, says Castro, should also serve the larger, secular community. Indeed, he or she is often called upon by the secular community to share in its problems, agonies and pains. This often confronts the pastor with a dilemma: When does he or she act as an ordinary citizen and when as a pastor? This is a problem which is not easily solved. When the pastor decides to accept the personal challenge of society, he or she is almost immediately confronted with a potential controversy in the congregation; some will stand by with him or her; others will oppose his or her involvement, especially with regards to politics. The pastor's activity along these lines may at times even affect the congregation's participation in society. In effect, the pastor's involvement in community affairs can become an excuse for the congregation to escape an involved relationship with the community. Castro does not see any easy solution to this dilemma. He does outline, however, four dimensions of pastoral service to the secular community: (1) being near to society in the realm of human relations so as to enlarge its view of existence with the richness of the gospel; (2) helping to clarify the human problem in the struggle for liberation from the depth of the Christian faith; (3) reconciling action in order to alleviate situations of tension and thus make possible more humane conditions to continue the struggle for a fuller life; and (4) maintaining a symbolic presence in the political arena.

In this way Castro outlines what he considers to be the basic issues in the formulation of an indigeneous pastoral theology. But why does he choose these and not other issues? What is the underlying perspective which leads him to pose the question of a Latin American pastoral theology in the way in which he does?

*Perspective.* We have already alluded to Castro's Uruguayan background. Being caught up in the life and death struggle of one of the most secular states of the Continent, one of the most urbanized, with a long parliamentary democratic tradition, it is natural that he should see the contemporary history of Latin America in terms of a struggle.

that he should maintain the ideal of plurality and democracy in his vision of the Continent's future, and that he should be particularly sensitive to the problem of secularization - especially in its Latin American form: *i.e.*, not in terms of technological development but of the phenomenon of political revolution.

Castro is a special type of Uruguayan, however -- one who lived and ministered in the Bolivian Altiplano during the 1952 revolution. He witnessed the plight of the Indian masses that made this event necessary and the Agrarian Reform that was crushed along with the Revolution, and the eventual collapse of the Bolivian economy on account of the lack of an effective, well organized infra-structure. He has traveled through the length and breadth of the Continent and has been confronted with the cultural, social, economic and political peculiarities of each nation and sub-region. Thus, while his Uruguayan context is definitely influential in his approach to the Continental situation, the temptation to universalize the former has been greatly checked by his experience in the *other* Latin Americas. Even so, one notices a slight tendency to do just that in the approach to the religious situation, and especially in the way he envisages the pastoral office.

A second influential factor in Castro's analysis is his role as a mission-oriented ecumenical churchman. This is evident in his constant references to parallel situations in other continents, his continuous reference to Latin American Catholicism and the missiological framework within which he places the question of pastoral theology.

Thirdly, he speaks from the perspective of a theologically informed pastor. His 20 years of pastoral experience is everywhere evident. Complex theological concepts and problems are translated into popular, down-to-earth images and terms, via vivid illustrations. One finds multiple references in his sermons and writings to the little problems of congregational life and an interest in the personal problems of the average member of the congregation. Though his theological talents are universally recognized, he himself claims to be nothing more or less than a pastor. He combines his pastoral concern and background, with his theological insights to give to the book under discussion a truly pastoral *and* theological focus.

Finally, we must note Castro's commitment to a non-violent methodology of social change, for this, too, gives an added perspective to his total vision of the church's mission and the pastoral vocation.

Though he sees God's redemptive hand in the conflicts of history, and even though he defines the church's task in terms of accompanying God's action, and the pastor's essential calling as that of equipping the church to fulfill its responsibility, Castro disassociates all of these notions from the arms' struggles. He envisions the Latin American pastor as an agent both of change and reconciliation, and the church as a community of love and peace. Though he respects those, who like Camilo Torres, have taken to the hills and joined the armed struggle out of Christian conviction, Castro rejects this option as a viable solution to the problems of the Continent and as a faithful interpretation of the ethical imperatives of the gospel.

### *Evaluation*

In evaluating Castro's Strachan lectures, we must bear in mind the tentative character of these reflections. They were neither delivered as polished product nor designed to deal comprehensively with the subject. At most, they are an invitation to participate in the process of critical reflection on the mission of the pastoral office within the Latin American Protestant church.

*Positive aspects.* The first comment that must be made is that this book transmits the theologico-pastoral thought of one of the leading Protestant pastoralists of the Continent. This is in itself of great value, given the scarcity of top-quality original material in the field of pastoral theology. In this case, we have not only a stimulating reflection from one who is very sensitive to the pastoral problems of Latin American *Christianity* as a whole, but also an original, even if preliminary, contribution from one of the most fertile minds in the area of Protestant pastoral reflection.

Secondly, this work is important because it is a pioneer effort toward the development of an indigenous, contextual and Reformed pastoral theology for Latin America. In my opinion, Castro is the first to raise the *formal* question for such a theology. He travels the path of an intensive, passionate dialogue on the pastoral challenge which contemporary Latin American society poses for Christianity in general and Protestantism in particular. He invites his fellow pastors to search diligently for an authentic pastoral model. He challenges the churches to launch pastoral experiments so as to discover the pastoral methods that most effectively correspond to the needs of the peoples of Latin America.

Thirdly, Castro's work is especially significant because of its mis-

siological orientation. By locating pastoral theology within the church's missionary praxis and the latter within the larger context of God's redemptive mission, by patterning the pastoral task after the model of Christ and by insisting on interpreting and actualizing the latter in the light of the concrete Latin American reality Castro has tried to integrate missiology and pastoral theology. Indeed, his work is a paradigm of both a pastoral missiology and a missiological pastoral theology; *i.e.*, a pastorally oriented theology of mission and a mission-oriented theology of the pastoral ministry. This implies, on the one hand, that missiology must be concerned with whether or not the church is fulfilling its mission pastorally. On the other hand, it implies that pastoral theology must not limit itself to the intra-congregational functions of the pastor nor to the ministry of concrete persons, but must always bear in mind the wider context of mission and the total reality of the world.

From the strictly theological point of view, the book excels in biblical and exegetical faithfulness, evangelical spirit and integral hermeneutical approach. This is especially, though not exclusively, evident in the two additional lectures included in the appendix. In both, there is an admirable effort to correlate the biblical demands with the convulsed situation of Latin American society. They are also highlighted by Castro's view of salvation as at once a personal experience and a social responsibility. Salvation, he says, affects the personal life of men and women as well as their social environment. Christians are not only saved from sin and its consequences, but are saved for the glory of God in the service of humanity. He insists on social changes which are genuinely liberating and humanizing and not new forms of oppression and dehumanization.

*Critical aspects.* Though, as it has been noted, one of the unique contributions of this book is its missiological orientation, it evidences a tendency throughout to limit the field of pastoral theology to the pastoral ministry of the church.<sup>54</sup> Pastoral theology, it is presupposed, studies the nature and function of those who are set apart to

54. Castro recognizes, to be sure, the church's role as a pastoral community (Cf. *Pastoral*, pp. 121, 122). But he does not deal at length upon it. Practically all of the space is dedicated to those who have a specific pastoral vocation. (Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 107). For a study that deals specifically with the pastoral vocation of the church, see Jorge León, *Psicología pastoral para todos los creyentes* (Buenos Aires: Por el autor, 1971), especially pp. 27-29.

lead, serve, care for, look after, teach, comfort and guide the people of God. But is there not also a pastoral vocation that belongs to the church as a whole? Does not the church have a pastoral responsibility before the world? Is this not implied in the biblical imagery of the church as a royal, priestly, prophetic, pilgrim and missionary community (Cf., e.g., Mt. 28:19, 20; Jn. 10:16; 20:21; 21:15-18; 1 Pet. 2:9, 10)? Does not even Eph. 4:10-12, which speaks so specifically about the pastoral office, underscore the pastoral (ministerial) function of *all* the saints?

The author also projects a highly professional view of the Latin American pastorate. He conceives of the pastor as someone who is highly trained, who dedicates all of his or her time to the work of the parish, who is looked upon by the secular community as a symbol of respectability, in short, someone whose business is to provide a special type of service. He does not seem to take into account the thousands of lay pastors who are neither trained nor carry out full-time work in their churches. Neither does he seem to be conscious of those denominations and local congregations that do not have a single pastor, but place, instead, the pastoral task in the hands of a group of believers. Why these obvious omissions? Could this not be a reflexion of the author's denominational and socio-religious background?

There is, moreover, a lack of emphasis on the pastor's role in the extension of the gospel to the regions beyond. Though Castro underscores the place of evangelization in the pastoral ministry and though he makes numerous references to the church in other continents, he hardly touches upon the concrete possibility of service beyond one's national, cultural or continental frontiers. Much less is there any emphasis on the responsibility of the churches of the Continent toward the still numerous pockets of people in Latin America and elsewhere who have physically never heard the gospel of Christ. For a book that begins with a "missionary perspective" this is passing strange and surprising.

Then there are many missing links in Castro's definition of pastoral services. The chapter on worship has no reference whatever to the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist (!). The content of the evangelistic message and the implications of this task in contemporary Latin American society are heavily stressed. But there is hardly anything said about the strategic and tactical problem (motivation

and urgency of evangelization, planning and methodology for an effective penetration into the different continental frontiers). Pastoral care gets two full chapters, but preaching gets one paragraph and Christian education and church administration get none! Beyond this, the book is silent on such matters as the life and personal qualifications of the pastor (pastoral ethics) and interpastoral relations.

Then there is finally a strictly theological question. If there is any single characteristic of Castro's theology that stands out above the others it is the constant reference to the Christian as someone who "hopes against hope" in and for history.<sup>55</sup> Castro refuses to be shaken by the disappointments, defeats and frustrations of history. He sees the Christian as one who labors without ceasing for a better world in which to live. He sees Latin America as marching toward a new tomorrow. He refuses to view the Christian hope in an escapist perspective. He sees it rather, though not exclusively, in relation to the earthly city.<sup>56</sup>

This raises several questions. What are the boundaries of the earthly city? What is the relationship between it and the city with "foundations whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10)? Where in Castro's eschatology does he reckon with the "not-yet" of the kingdom? What role does the reality of sin, the awareness of which Castro recognizes as one of the critical insights that the Christian brings to the process of social transformation,<sup>57</sup> play in the hope of a new Latin America? Precisely how far can we identify Rom. 8:22f. ("groaning in travail")<sup>58</sup> with the Latin American process of liberation? How do we distinguish God's action in history and that of Satan, or the presence of Christ from that of the anti-Christ? In short, should there not be certain safeguards in order to avoid, on the one hand, an over enthusiastic and naive optimism, so contrary to the historical realism of the Bible, and, on the other, the nihilism of the apostles of despair, so contrary to the hope that has been given to us in Christ?

As has been said, this is not Castro's last word on the subject.<sup>59</sup>

55. Cf. *Pastoral*, p. 79.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 78.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

59. For a more recent publication on this same subject, see the symposium of

Hopefully, these are questions with which he will deal in future reflections; some of them have been already dealt with in previous studies.<sup>60</sup> It must be said, however, that whatever theological lacunae one may find in a critical reading of *Hacia una pastoral latinoamericana* they cannot abrogate the significant contribution of this work to pastoral theology and the missiological reflection of Latin American Protestantism. Indeed, in locating the pastoral ministry within the church's mission and the latter within God's missionary action in history, Castro has helped to deepen the question of mission as it appears in Mainline Protestantism. He has introduced, moreover, a fundamental maxim into the missiological discussion of the period in consideration: the effective participation of the church in God's mission in the world is contingent upon the development of an effective pastoral leadership. This alone makes the book a milestone.

### MORTIMER ARIAS, *SALVACIÓN ES LIBERACIÓN*

As in the previous case, the name of Mortimer Arias is already familiar to us. But whereas in chapter VI he was seen in relation to his leadership in the IEMB's search for a more concrete expression of its mission, here we will deal directly with his contribution to the issue of salvation in contemporary Latin America, particularly as it appears in the Protestantism of the latter part of our period of investigation.

#### *Biography*

As stated, Arias is known for his many years of labor in Bolivian Methodism. He was educated at Union Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires and at the University of Birmingham (England). He has traveled widely and has written numerous books related to various aspects of the church's life in mission.<sup>61</sup>

Arias has had a fruitful career as a Methodist churchman. He has held urban and rural pastorates in Argentina and Uruguay and served as Secretary of Evangelism and Youth of the Methodist Church in

several Latin American Protestant pastoralists, edited by Castro, *Pastores del pueblo de Dios* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1974).

60. See, for example, Emilio Castro, "Misión de la iglesia en América Latina," in *El rol de la mujer en la iglesia y en la sociedad*, pp. 93-106.

61. Cf. the bibliography at the end of the book.

Uruguay. He has taught philosophy at the Grandon Institute of Montevideo and Old Testament at the South American Technical Institute and the Mennonite Theological Seminary, both in Montevideo.

In Bolivia, he served, first, as a parish pastor, then as the Executive Secretary of the then Bolivian Conference of the Methodist Church in Latin America and, finally, as the first bishop of the IEMB, a post he has held since 1969. During his years of service in Bolivia, he has manifested a passionate evangelistic concern. He served in 1965 as coordinator of the year-long nation-wide Evangelism-in-Depth program. A year later, he coordinated a Methodist continental-wide consultation on evangelism.<sup>62</sup> He then founded a lay training program which turned out to be a forerunner of the TEE movement. Since his episcopal election, he has led the IEMB patiently and consistently along the path of a greater commitment to a holistic evangelization, as was noted earlier.

Arias has also been known for his mature relations with missionary organizations around the world. He has led the IEMB to establish a partnership-relationship with the Church of Christ in Japan and strengthen, on a more mature basis, its long relation with the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church (USA).<sup>63</sup>

He is an active member of the Commission of World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC and has chaired the latter's sub-committee on evangelization. His ecumenical leadership in this field was symbolically recognized when he was invited to be the feature speaker of the plenary on Section I (Confessing Christ Today) in the Vth Assembly of the WCC.

In Bolivia, he has sought to build bridges to Catholics and the Evangelical-Protestant missionary societies and churches that work in the country. He has led the IEMB in setting up several cooperative efforts with the RCC, the latest being the formation of a joint theological study center in La Paz. As evidence of his good relations and identification with the Evangelical community, he was invited to be

62. Cf. Mortimer Arias, ed., *Evangelización y revolución en América Latina* (Montevideo: Iglesia Metodista en América Latina, 1969).

63. Cf. his address to the General Executive Committee of the Board of Mission of the United Methodist Church, "Mutual Responsibility," in IRM, LX:238 (April, 1971), 249-250.



part of the Bolivian delegation at the International Congress on World Evangelization held in July, 1974 in Lausanne, Switzerland. He has also been invited to deliver a paper at the Latin American Theological Fraternity's forthcoming consultation on "Unity and Mission in Latin America," scheduled for March 1976 in Uruguay.

A highlight of his ministry, especially during the 70's, is the attention that he has given to the large Indian population of Bolivia. He has not only introduced into the IEMB the concept of a bilingual, bicultural church, but has gone out of his way to learn the Aymara language himself. As noted earlier, this has been one of the contributing factors to the unprecedented numerical growth that the IEMB experienced in the last quadrennium.

### *Analysis*

*Salvación es liberación* represents a particular moment in Mortimer Arias' life as well as in Latin American Protestant Christianity. The very way in which the book originated, the issues that it deals with and the way it tackles it make necessary a certain inversion of the analytical pattern that was followed in the discussion of the González and Castro studies.

*Context and Perspective.* The book was written immediately after the gathering of the World Conference on Salvation Today, held in Bangkok, Thailand from December 29, 1972 to January 9, 1973 (Bangkok). Its immediate frame of reference is, therefore, the studies prepared before and the documents and reports produced during the Conference. It is part of a world-wide collection written for the purpose of interpreting the Conference to the churches in their various socio-cultural settings around the world.<sup>64</sup> The theme of Bangkok was itself the offspring of the first world-wide ecumenical conference held in Latin America: the Seventh Conference on World Mission, held in México City in 1963 (México). Its concern over the problem of secularization led it to pose the question that also infor-

64. Cf., for example, J. Verkuyl, *Jesus Christus de bevrijder* (Baarn: Uitgeverij Ten Have b.v., 1973), written for the Netherlands; Arne Sovik, *Salvation Today* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1973), written for North America; and Pauline Webb, *Salvation Today* (London: SCM, 1974), written for Great Britain. For two critical publications, see Ralph Winter, ed., *The Evangelical Response to Bangkok* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1973) and Peter Beyerhaus, *Bangkok '73: The Beginning or End of World Mission?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974).

med Bangkok's theme: "What is the form and content of the salvation which Christ offers to men and women in the secular world?" Yet, while the theme of Salvation Today "excited lively, sometimes impassioned, discussions throughout the world during preparations for Bangkok,"<sup>65</sup> the only known study that was undertaken in Latin America was that of Miguel Angel Bruin and it was limited to the River Plate republics.<sup>66</sup> It can be said, then, that prior to the publication of *Salvación es liberación* Latin Americans had heard very little about Bangkok.<sup>67</sup>

Even so, Bangkok was a very important conference for Latin America; the Latin American missionary situation was very much a part of its deliberations. Arias is, therefore, correct in stating that the issues discussed in his book are "vital for the future of the Latin American Christian community."<sup>68</sup> They are a fundamental part of the present hour.

For this reason, it is important to bear in mind that while the book was written against the background of Bangkok, the issues that are dealt with and the way they are discussed must be seen *within* Latin America. This is another way of saying that Arias is fundamentally concerned with salvation *in* Latin America *today*. He is not just interested in giving a report of Bangkok, but in analyzing the issues raised there for the context of the continental reality.

To understand *Liberación*, one needs, accordingly, to be aware of the particular situation in which Latin America found itself in 1973. We need not repeat here what has already been said in previous chapters. It should be noted, however, that it was around this time

65. Sovik, *Salvation*, pp. 8, 9.

66. Miguel Angel Bruin, *Concepto cristiano de la salvación hoy* (Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudios Cristianos, 1970).

67. One of the few organs that carried any significant information on Bangkok was the *Supplement* to the Rio de Janeiro-based news-bulletin, CEI, which dedicated an entire issue to the Conference. It included an article by Rubem Alves ("Missão da Igreja numa era Apocalíptica"), a report by D. G. Vergara dos Santos ("A Salvação nos dias de hoje"), a Portuguese version of M. M. Thomas' Bangkok address ("Salvação Hoje: Uma Declaração Pessoal"), Cristoph Barth's study of Psalm 30 ("A Salvação Segundo Salmo 30"), the document of Section II ("Salvação en Justiça Social") and the message to the churches ("Carta as Igrejas Sobre Salvação Hoje"). Cf. *Salvação Hoje, CEI Suplemento*, No. 3 (Março, 1973).

68. Arias, *Liberación*, p. 5.

that the Exodus was beginning to be questioned as a viable paradigm for the theological interpretation of the Latin American reality. The most dramatic and articulate example is that of Rubem Alves' *Tomorrow's Child*. In this book, Alves makes a shift from the position taken in his earlier work, *A Theology of Human Hope*. He says that he belongs to "a frustrated generation." He comments further:

This generation once believed that we were at a turning point in history, that a new world was being born. We felt like pilgrims in the Exodus on our way to the Promised Land. Today we feel that the reality is quite the opposite. We are exiles in a Captivity, and it is unlikely that we shall ever see the Promised Land. This is the source of our frustration.<sup>69</sup>

These words, which must be understood against Alves' peculiar Brazilian context, carried a very special meaning for Mortimer Arias, since he lives and works in an even more repressive environment. This explains why his last and most important chapter bears the distinctive mark of Alves' new "theology in captivity" and the reason why he had originally entitled the book "Between Captivity and Liberation."<sup>70</sup>

*Structure and Content.* It is from within this dialectical situation that Arias responds personally to the question of salvation today. He maintains that salvation is experienced and proclaimed as life in a situation of captivity, as mission in suffering, as hope without illusion, as an inconclusive post datum to the process of liberation.

The latter is his concluding reflection. It is preceded by a discussion of the main issues brought out at Bangkok and is followed by an

69. Rubem Alves, *Tomorrow's Child* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 18, 188. It is interesting to note how Alves' new perspective has even affected Emilio Castro. As he said in a personal conversation shortly after the Chilean coup, in September 1973, "the challenge now is how to translate Alves' insight into pastoral terms." A year later, he reprinted the last chapter of *Tomorrow's Child*, in the IRM, introducing it as the words of "a Latin American prophet" who provides "a look forward at the shape of things to come in mission." (Emilio Castro, "From the Editor," IRM, LXIII:252 (October 1974), 474; Cf. Rubem Alves, "The Seed of the Future: the Community of Hope," *Ibid.*, pp. 551-569.) This is further revealed in Castro's most recent work. Cf. *Amidst Revolution*, trans. by James and Margaret Goff (Belfast: Christian Journals Limited, 1975), pp. 44-46, 66-77.

70. In fact this is the sub-title of the Portuguese edition. Cf. *Salvação Hoje - entre o cautiverio e a libertação* (Rio de Janeiro: Editôra Tempo e Presença, 1974).

appendix which includes the inaugural statement of CWME's new director and Bangkok's letter to the churches. In a separate companion booklet, Arias has added a series of suggested projects for each of the text's nine chapters to stimulate a reflection-action process among congregations and Christian groups which are "sincerely concerned with the future of the Christian mission in our nations" and would like "to deepen and implement the perspectives of Bangkok."<sup>71</sup>

Each chapter forms part of a larger organizational unit. The first introduces the subject, placing it in the context of the Conference's background. Chapters II-IV follow the discussion of Bangkok's Section II, Salvation and Social Justice. Chapter V deals with the theme of Section I, Culture and Identity, while VI-VII analyze the material of Section III, Churches Renewed in Mission. Chapter VIII picks up the concluding issue of The New Era of World Mission and Chapter IX takes a formal look at the present moment of Latin America in the light of the issues raised at Bangkok.

Arias begins with a reference to the contemporary search for salvation, manifested, consciously or unconsciously, in so many different ways. It is revealed in the quest for security, hope, meaning in life, strength to live or die and a basic orientation in interpersonal relations that can be observed in modern societies. It is witnessed both among the poor and outcasts as well as the rich and well to do. The need for this quest is sometimes denied by the human affirmation of a new-found scientific and technological power, but is confirmed by humanity's existential impotence and moral contradictions. Though men and women have improved their capacity to provide or search for new ways of alleviating the hardships of life, they continue to deny their very humanity by using their discoveries to oppress and repress others. The search for salvation takes ambiguous forms, true, but the human need for salvation is very real indeed.

Equally real and clear is the gospel's universal answer to this need. God wants all human beings to find wholeness and truth. This includes the communication of God's diagnosis of the fundamental problem of humanity, namely, the reality of sin, and of his judgment upon all of the ways men and women have devised to save themselves. Hence the gospel's proclamation of God's reconciling action in

71. Arias, *Liberación*, p. 6.

Jesus Christ as the *only* way of salvation. This, affirms Arias, is the central thrust of the Christian message.

The doctrine of reconciliation, however, has received varying emphases in the course of Christian history. In the Reformation, for example, it was the experience of justification by faith that was stressed; in the 17th and 18th century, it was sanctification, the experience of a new life; today, the key word seems to be participation. Hence, the questions that were posed at Bangkok: What is the content of the gospel of salvation? How do Christians participate in God's salvation? And how does the world with all of its problems and conflicts participate in that salvation which God has wrought in Christ and which is proclaimed in the gospel?

These questions coincide with the rediscovery of the wholeness of the biblical message of salvation. The author reports that Bangkok underscored both the material and spiritual character of salvation, its totality and inclusiveness. It described God's saving work in terms of four social dimensions. God, it said, is salvifically involved in the struggles for (1) economic justice in situations of exploitation of people by people, (2) human dignity in situations of political oppression, (3) solidarity amidst alienation of persons from persons, and (4) hope in the midst of despair in personal life.<sup>72</sup>

Arias goes on to consider the contemporary understanding of salvation as liberation and the implication flowing from this understanding. He describes the prominent role which the Exodus model has played in the theology of liberation, the various ways in which the Exodus has been understood in Latin America and the kind of exegetical treatment it received at Bangkok. Arias then underscores the redeeming character of the Exodus, its political dimension and its missionary implications. He states that the Exodus involves the possibility of protest and rebellion against oppression and captivity. It also involves the possibility of release and freedom for service and commitment. In either case, it is God who is at work in multiple ways, calling men and women to participate in his liberating purpose in history.

Pursuing the same line of thinking, he calls out the paradox of God's liberating initiative and human responsibility. He says that while God has decisively spoken the word of liberation for all of

72. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

humanity in Jesus Christ, we are always confronted with the question of how the salvation which God has made available in Christ becomes operative in human history. The question is not whether Jesus saves or how he does it, but how his salvation becomes effective in the life of men, women and children today.

This is another way of posing the question regarding the human agents of salvation. There are two types of agents, according to Arias: (1) the church and (2) secular forces. Though the church is God's special agent in the ministry of reconciliation, God is not bound to work exclusively through it. Indeed, he works freely and sovereignly through nations, persons and historical events. "In fact," he observes,

the liberating task of Jesus, just as he himself assumes and defines it in his inaugural sermon, demands the participation of other agents. [Each dimension] of this task requires the full effort of the church, everything it can do in its evangelistic teaching, in its healing, diaconal and humanizing ministries. This is true, but much more: God's arm goes much farther than the church! <sup>73</sup>

The church, however, is given the privilege and responsibility of participating with God's other agents in the processes of human salvation.

Another aspect of God's gift of salvation is the recovery of human dignity; *i.e.*, of the worth of human beings created in the image of God. The contemporary search for human dignity is a sign of humanity's longing for full restoration. This quest appears in the search for selfhood and identity which can be witnessed all over the world. It has to do with the relationship between faith and culture and becomes especially acute in view of the radicalness of conversion, the Christian's distinct role in society and the cultural domination which some missionary societies have exercised over those whom they have evangelized.

While it is true that conversion has at times alienated Christians from their culture, it need not do so inasmuch as it is always related to the circumstances where it takes place. This means that a Christian is always one who is part of a given culture and who maintains, at the same time, a critical distance. Paraphrasing the late D. T. Niles, Arias states that too often the missionary enterprise has not just brought

73. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

the seed of the gospel, but the seed with the plant, pot and plant-stand of the Western version of Christianity. It is, therefore, necessary to recover the base and take out the seed so that it can be planted in the evangelized community's own cultural soil.

The question of salvation revolves in many ways around the church. For the latter is not only an agent of the gospel, but one of its fundamental fruits. Without the church's growth, said Section III of Bangkok, the ministry of salvation in the world is greatly limited. But if this is so, it is no less true that in order for the church effectively to fulfill its calling it must continually renew itself. A conflict appears, thus, between two church strategies, namely, that of "church growth" and "church renewal." He traces the historical development and essential theses of each, especially in Latin America, and concludes that they are complementary rather than opposed to one another.

He shows, moreover, that the growth and expansion of the faith is not necessarily due to favorable external factors. He compares the situation of the Kimbangu Church of Zaire and the Latin American Pentecostal Movement. In each case, he points out, there is impressive growth under adverse circumstances. But both cases reveal a correspondence between growth and indigenization. These factors, however, were and are fundamentally dependent upon the capacity of the movements to respond "to the felt needs" of their respective peoples and societies and adapt

organizational forms that are compatible with the cultural environment: in the one case, the tribal structure and the colonial society; and in the other, the structures of indigeneous, traditional and transitional-urban societies.<sup>74</sup>

The question of a universal salvation has to do, finally, with the concept of world mission. Yet, mission has not always been a universal reality; too often it has been the sole property of those churches which with their financial resources have been able to afford the sending of missionaries. Bangkok, says Arias, reaffirmed something that had been previously articulated in other world conferences; *i.e.*, that "we are at the end of a missionary era and at the beginning of world mission."<sup>75</sup>

74. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 122. The phrase is a quote from Emilio Castro's inaugural statement.

The notion that anything like a world mission had been achieved was, nevertheless, challenged at Bangkok by numerous representatives from the Third World who felt that in many parts of the world hardly anything had been done to internationalize the missionary enterprise. The latter remained in the hands of the powerful. It was still wrapped up in structures of domination and dependence. This explains the suggestion of a temporary moratorium on missionary personnel among established churches in the Third World as a means of freeing them for a greater participation in mission.

Arias observes, however, that such a move does not necessarily guarantee the acceleration of maturity. He suggests instead the notion of interdependence, which took its rise in the period between Mexico and Bangkok as a healthier approach to the problem of power and domination. This implies a serious effort of coordination between churches and missionary societies. There have been some societies or denominations, nevertheless, who, either because of their commitment to evangelism or to development and the process of humanization at any cost, have been reluctant to enter into such a partnership relation with their more conservative or less evangelistic offspring. The challenge of the new era of world mission is, therefore, contingent upon the willingness of all churches, ecclesial groups and missionary societies to relate with one another in mission. Only in relation and cooperation, he adds, "will we rediscover our mission."<sup>76</sup>

### *Evaluation*

To make a thorough evaluation of the content of this book one would have to go back to the Bangkok documents themselves. The selection of *Liberación* as a representative missiological work of our period of study, however, was not made on the basis of what it says about Bangkok, but of how it deals with the issues raised by the latter in the context of Latin America. For this reason, we will forego *direct* critical interaction with Bangkok.<sup>77</sup>

*Positive aspects.* At the very outset it must be emphasized that one of the major contributions of this book is precisely the fact that it makes available to Latin American Christians in general, and Pro-

76. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

77. For my own critical analysis of Bangkok, see *The Church*, pp. 265-301.



testants in particular, the major concerns of Bangkok. This is a valuable service given the poor promotion that the Conference received throughout the Continent. With the exception of a few leaders, the great majority of Latin American Protestants are to this day unaware that this important event dealing with an issue so relevant to the Latin American situation and the church's mission had taken place. Arias' book has at least made it possible for the churches and Christians of the Continent to have access to the insights of this Conference. In this respect, Arias has served as Latin America's opinion leader in the ecumenical discussions on Salvation Today.

This brings to mind a second contribution of the book. Not only is it valuable for the information it transmits, but for the way it correlates the major themes of the Conference with the concrete experience of Latin American Christianity. Arias wastes no time in discussing the issues at stake: (1) the scandal of economic exploitation, political oppression, socio-cultural alienation and personal despair in a continent where the gospel has been proclaimed for over 500 years and where many of its inhabitants claim, at least nominally, to have accepted it; (2) the challenge which this scandal poses to the mission of the eschatological community of salvation (the church) in Latin America and the church's internal differences as to how to respond adequately to this situation; (3) the consciousness of a universal search for salvation and a common missionary responsibility and the concomitant frustration over the inability to give a credible, truly international common witness; (4) the awareness of a situation of captivity, in the church and in society, and the concomitant imperative of ministering the hope of salvation through suffering and brokenness. Bangkok is thus presented as an invitation to reflect and act upon the meaning of salvation at the crossroads of contemporary Latin America.

Another strength of the book is its soteriological interpretation of Latin American society. By introducing the biblico-theological notion of a comprehensive salvation as a hermeneutical key, Arias is able to present continental reality in its true depth. He discloses the complexity of the missionary situation. It is not just a conflict of socio-economico-political power and powerlessness that Latin America is experiencing today; not only a tension between the numerical strength of some churches and groups and the strong social consciousness of others; not merely a matter of personal release and

fulfillment, on the one hand, or personal despair, inner brokenness and insecurity, on the other: not just the mere memory of a bitter past, the imposition of a dehumanizing present and the persistent refusal to accept it as determinative for the future: nor only a frustration over the longing for a better tomorrow and the meeting of repeated set backs in the attempt to bring it about — *it is all of these things together!*

Such a situation precludes the possibility of easy and cheap solutions. It draws the church's attention away from itself to the infinite resources of the Spirit. In effect, it reminds the church of the fact that mission is fundamentally a spiritual struggle against principalities and powers and, therefore, that its weapons "are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4).

In addition to the above mentioned point, the book describes mission as a soteriological event. It sees mission in terms of God's saving action amidst the complexity of the human situation. It sees the church as a sign and an instrument of God's salvation. It inquires, therefore, into the intensity of the church's involvement in mission. Is it disclosing or obscuring God's saving deeds in Latin America today? Is the message it proclaims congruent with what it is? In short, is the church an authentic community of faith which, experiencing God's saving power, has a message not "in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power" (2 Cor. 2:4), or is it just a fossilized, alienated and alienating religious institution?

Finally, Arias is to be commended for the practical emphasis of his work. He is not content with just putting crucial and profound mis-siological issues before the church. He wants to bring the discussion to the level of the local congregation and provoke it to reflection and action.

The best evidence of this concern and intention is the companion booklet for "reflection and study," which was mentioned above. In 16 pages, Arias packs a treasury of Bible study aides and suggestions related to the theological issues discussed in the main text. He includes numerous questions geared to stimulate discussion on the concrete situation of the local congregation. He takes a Uruguayan poem, several Argentinian protest songs and the narrative of an experience in a *flavella* of Río de Janeiro, all of which highlight social, economic, political and cultural problems related to the faith, inviting the reader to reflect critically on them. He inserts several strat-

egico-programmatic exercises to help local congregations analyze and evaluate their missionary performance and plan for a more effective engagement in their respective localities. Finally, he proposes a correlational exercise between biblical situations of captivity and the contemporary Latin American situation in order to discover ways of living and witnessing under captivity.

The practical value of *Liberación* (its informative character, correlational function, soteriological interpretation of contemporary history and missiological challenge), however, do not exempt it from critical assessment. Let us turn, then, to an examination of its vulnerable areas.

*Critical aspects.* Perhaps the most obvious weakness of Arias' work is its uncritical stance *vis à vis* Bangkok. Though he does not hesitate to use its insights to criticize certain sectors of the Latin American church and the foreign missionary enterprise, particularly that of North America, he fails to give a Latin American criticism to the Conference. Either he identified himself so closely with this event thereby losing his critical capacity, or he considered a critique "off limits" given the fact that he was asked to undertake the task by the Conference planners. Interestingly enough, this is the basic criticism that J. C. Maraschin raises against the book in his review. He comments that

the book denotes an uncritical stance over against certain jargon of the official language of the World Council of Churches and. . . , therefore, loses theological depth. Naturally, in these cases, the conclusions easily acquire, at times, a more or less demagogic tone that causes us, unfortunately, to distrust the viability of the proposals that originate in assemblies [like Bangkok].<sup>78</sup>

A more critical view of the Conference would not only have given more credibility to Arias' argument but would also have constituted a Latin American contribution to the ecumenical discussion that followed.

One notes a second problem area in the author's treatment of the question of salvation proper. This problem has two aspects.

The first is related to the tension between the "now" of salvation and the "not-yet." Following Section II, Arias defines salvation as a comprehensive process which manifests itself in four human struggles.

78. J. C. Maraschin, "Resenha Bibliográfica," review of *Salvação Hoje* by Mortimer Arias, in *Simposio*, No. 12 (Agosto de 1974), 56-57.

Each is an anticipation of the final and definitive salvation. He fails to point out clearly, however, that because of salvation's eschatological character and the still pending presence of sin and evil, each historical manifestation of salvation is provisional, imperfect and, at times, obscure and ambiguous. The experience of salvation is, accordingly, always partial and relative. Salvation *today* takes the form of an ongoing, liberating, but *critical* process.

The other aspect of the problem has to do with the agents of salvation. God carries out his saving work in history not only through the life and mission of the church, but also through secular events, nations and persons. This raises numerous questions that Arias does not seem to grapple with, probably because Bangkok left them untouched!

What is the relation, for example, between the secular presence of salvation and its regenerating experience? What is the difference between the secular agents and the community of salvation? How does the latter participate in God's saving action in the secular areas of life and how does the world and the "groaning creation" participate in the saving experience of the church? Is doing the work of faith synonymous with faith itself or rather a test of faith? To which of these situations does Mt. 25:31-45:7:21-29 *really* refer?<sup>79</sup>

In the third place, there is in Arias' book a tendency to define the church in ecclesiastical terms. He acknowledges the fact that there is more to the church than its present form.<sup>80</sup> In this respect, he admits its mysterious character. But he seems to identify the ecclesi-

79. It is interesting to note in these two passages, to which Arias makes specific reference, how obedience is presented as a test of faith rather than a substitute for faith. In the 25:31ff. passage, the "blessed" of the Father are identified as "the sheep," "the righteous" and the heirs of the *kingdom* which has been *prepared* for them "from the foundation of the world." Their salvation is not based on their deeds, but on the faith which these deeds authenticate. In the 7:21ff. passage, entrance into the kingdom is not just based upon "doing," but upon "hearing" and "doing" (Cf. V. 24). In both cases, obedience presupposes and validates faith. The Lord recognizes as his own not those who outwardly recognize him but rather those who know him well enough to discern his presence in the world, those who in their obedience reveal their true identity as part of the kingdom. To identify the "blessed of the Father" and they who "enter the kingdom" as those who serve Christ "without knowing him" (Arias, *Liberación*, p. 59) is, in my opinion, to do exegetical violence to these two passages.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

astical institution as the only form of church that is known to us. This is especially evidenced in his apparent refusal to grant para-ecclesiastical structures a churchly quality. He insists that these structures should submit themselves to the discipline of a partnership with a local church, but does not seem to be willing to admit the need of the local ecclesiastical structures to submit to the discipline of the charismatic community. How seriously is one committed to the exploration of the mystery of the church when one insists on measuring the church's reality with the yardstick of its ecclesiastical manifestations?

Fourthly, there is the problem of Arias' one-sided analysis of the theories of "church renewal" and "church growth." It is striking that while he does not hesitate to criticize the latter, his treatment of the former is reduced to a positive description of its historical development and major characteristics. He questions the underlying ideological and theological presuppositions of church-growth theory, but fails to take notice of the liberal-reformist ideology and church-centered theology of the Church-Renewal Movement.<sup>81</sup>

The most vulnerable point of Arias' critique of church-growth theory is his insistence on basing his entire analysis on the thought of Donald A. McGavran, as if the Church Growth *Movement* were identical with McGavran. Not only that, but many of his critical remarks are based on the 1968 IRM<sup>82</sup> symposium which, unfortunately, revolved almost exclusively around McGavran's thought and the category of numerical growth. Arias fails to take account of the contributions of Alan Tippett, Ralph Winter, Arthur Glasser, Charles Kraft, C. Peter Wagner and others. The omission of any reference to Tippett is especially unfortunate and ironic. Unfortunate, because he moves beyond McGavran's theory of church growth, differentiating between three different types of growth, numerical, organic and qualitative and, therefore, occupies a special chapter in the Church

81. For a Latin American critique of this movement, see Luis Rivera-Pagán, "Teología y praxis de liberación," in *Pueblo oprimido*, pp. 174-176. Rivera-Pagán underscores three fundamental defects of this movement: (1) It often turned out to be a mere effort of *re*-newal on the basis of a return to "a supposedly immaculate primitive Christianity" (p. 174). (2) It puts its major emphasis on intraecclesiastical tasks (p. 175). (3) It paid little attention to the social sciences as correlative of the biblical discipline (p. 176).

82. Cf. *Church Growth*, IRM, LVII:227 (July 1968).

Growth School. Ironic, because one of Tippet's major works<sup>83</sup> was prepared as part of the WCC's World Studies of Churches in Mission. In this study, Tippet reveals the conceptual influence on his work of the CWME-sponsored 1963 Ibberville, Quebec Consultation on Church Growth<sup>84</sup> in which he participated<sup>85</sup> and to which Arias refers in his background discussion of the Church Growth Movement. This conference underscored the interrelatedness of renewal and growth.

These observations are not meant to minimize the seriousness of Arias' critique. They simply point out some important missing links in his analysis, which weaken his case and make it lose credibility, at least for those who follow closely the Church Growth Movement.

As in the case of Justo L. González's *Historia de las misiones* and Emilio Castro's *Hacia una pastoral latinoamericana*, Latin American Protestants have reason to be grateful for Mortimer Arias' *Salvación es liberación*, in spite of the limitations noted above. He has not only made available a wealth of information to the average congregation and probed several fundamental issues of God's mission in the continental historical reality but has also provided a third model for engaging in missiological reflection.

In dealing with the question of mission from the perspective of "salvation today," Arias has taken the missiological task a step beyond the realm of church history and pastoral theology into the fields of biblical and systematic theology. Seen from these three angles, missiology reveals not only a concern for the way the gospel penetrates the multiple situations of life and the nature, function and quality of the ministry that prepares the church to fulfill its missionary vocation, but also a particular interest in the content and goal of the Christian faith.

83. Cf. Alan R. Tippet, *Solomon Islands Christianity* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1967).

84. Cf. "The Growth of the Church: A Statement," IRM, LVII:227 (July 1968), 330-334.

85. This is especially evident in Tippet's incorporation of the category of qualitative growth, although Charles W. Forman, in his book review, says that Tippet's concept of church growth "reflects the interests of the World Dominion books. . ." ("Churches in Mission," review of *Solomon Islands Christianity*, by Alan R. Tippet, by Charles W. Forman, in the IRM, LXII:227 (July), 364.) Be that as it may, the fact still remains that there is a notable correspondence between the Ibberville Statement and Tippet's book.

The three works considered in this chapter, with the concomitant missiological models that each offers, substantiate the general contention of the four missiologists mentioned in chapter I as to the integrative character of missiology. Far from being a peripheral and marginal discipline, missiology constitutes a fundamental part of the church's theological reflection; so important, in fact, that it affects and is affected by the whole spectrum of theology and the entire life of the church. And this is precisely how missiology appears in the Mainline-Protestantism of contemporary Latin America, as this and the previous chapters have tried to show.

## **PART FOUR**

### **MISSIOLOGY, MISSION AND THE FUTURE OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY IN LATIN AMERICA**



## CHAPTER XII

### MISSIOLOGY IN MAINLINE PROTESTANTISM

#### *Recapitulation*

#### MISSIOLOGY AS A DISCIPLINE OF THE CROSSROADS

Missiology, it has been asserted, emerges out of the missionary engagement of the church. The latter has been understood not so much in terms of its ecclesiastical or institutional form but more inclusively of its wider, more dynamic and charismatic expression, namely, as the community of those who have responded in faith to God's call in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, to participate in the life of his kingdom and who have committed themselves to his redemptive mission in the world. Missiology has as its object that multitude of believers participating personally and collectively, directly and indirectly, in word and deed, in the mission of the triune God; engaging in dialogue with the world; critically reflecting on the meaning, effectiveness, obstacles and possibilities of their service. It is thus the handmaid of mission; a discipline of the crossroads.

The notion of "crossroads" has been used in the course of this study in a two-fold sense: as (1) the meeting point between the sending (the church) and receiving (the world) communities; and (2) the place where the forces of history (ideologies, political and economic systems, social and religious movements) confront each other. From this perspective, missiology is concerned both with mission as a specific, communicative event and as a comprehensive, contextual process.

#### *Missiology as Reflection on a Frontier-Crossing Event*

If mission is a communicative event, however, the notions of "sending" and "receiving" cannot be taken as being mutually exclusive. For communication is a two-way process where the sender becomes a receiver and the receiver a sender. Indeed, there is in mission a dialectical relationship between the church and the world.

There is a sense in which the world, *i.e.*, humanity and its environment, comes to the church, provoking and challenging it and bearing witness to God's action in creation and history. The Bible teaches

that God's revelation is not strictly limited to the evangel (Cf., e.g., Ps. 19:1f.; Is. 45:1-8; Acts 14:16-17; 17:26-28; Rom. 1:19-20).<sup>1</sup> He speaks in, to and through the world.

To be sure, he has given in the evangel a special "dose" of himself. In Christ, he has spoken decisively and redemptively (Cf. Jn. 1:1ff.; Heb. 1:1-3), calling a new people unto him (Eph. 2:13f.; 1 P. 2:9-10) and unfolding the mystery of his will (Eph. 1:9ff.). Jesus Christ is the one who unlocks the riddle of life in that he himself is the salvific fullness of God's speech in nature and history. As the body of Christ and the community of the Spirit, the church has been given the stewardship of this truth to preserve and transmit faithfully to the world (Cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Tim. 6:20). The world depends upon the church's proclamation to come to a saving understanding of God's revelation.

But since God has spoken in history, his word must be understood and transmitted in historical terms and categories. In this sense, the church depends on the sciences, the arts and the dynamics of history to fulfill its calling faithfully. The Spirit, the revealer of all truth (Jn. 16:13), works through secular disciplines, agents and events to enable the church to live up to its calling and commitment.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that mission involves a process of stimulus and response. It is a response to a call to share with others, in the spirit of a servant, that which one has freely received. That call issues from God. The church can respond and send because it has been called by him, has come to him and has received from him the message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19). In consequence, the church goes out and sends out in his name (Cf. Mt. 28:18ff.).

Mission is dialogical; it involves a mutual sharing between the world and the church. It is a communicative engagement in which the world and the church encounter each other; a meeting point between the old and the new, between culture and faith.

For this reason, the world cannot be taken only as a passive receiver. There is a sense in which the world calls for and provokes the missionary encounter. This is so because in creation God initiated a dialogue with the world. Not only did he reveal his love and grace

1. Cf., among others, Albrecht Oepke, "Apokalupto," TDNT, III, Gerhard Kittel, ed., trans. from the German by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), pp. 563-592; G. C. Berkouwer, *General Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964).

in making fruitful the empty and formless earth (Gen. 2:7), but especially in imparting life and freedom to the human race (Gen. 2:7). Indeed, God invited man and woman to be his covenant partner by making them stewards of his creation (Gen. 1:26). This relationship, however, was broken in the Fall. Instead of responding to God in worship and praise, they became "futile in [their] thinking" so that their senseless mind "was darkened" (Rom. 1:21). Yet God "did not leave himself without witness" (Acts 14:17), before speaking "in the fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4) "by his Son" (Heb. 1:2).

Though men and women have sought to respond to God's witness, in nature, in their own religious consciousness (Rom. 2:15) and in history, through multiple attempts to create a language capable of reestablishing the broken fellowship (Cf. Rom. 1:22-23),<sup>2</sup> they can only find fulfillment in Jesus Christ. In him and through him God offers all human beings deliverance from their spiritual and moral corruption, and through their redemption, the entire cosmos (Rom. 8:19ff.). God has purposed, accordingly, to have the great news of

2. This, of course, represents a *Christian*-theological interpretation of the language of faith in other religions. It presupposes a basic discontinuity between them and Christianity, although it allows for a line of continuity in terms of a common humanity, a common awareness of transcendent reality and a common search for wholeness. The distinction lies between, on the one hand, the Christian claim of the uniqueness of Christ as Lord and Saviour of the world and, on the other, the fact that while the language of the Christian faith is a religious and, thus, human language, it is grounded, nevertheless, on God's revelation in Christ. Christianity puts religion at the service of faith, whereas other religions, while bearing indirect witness to God and to the need for a divine-human relationship, do not. They come short of their goal. Only through faith in the incarnate Word of God can men and women of other religious faiths come to a full, personal knowledge of God and thus be made whole.

For expanded treatments, from various perspectives, of this aspect of misology, which otherwise lies outside the scope of this study, see, among others, Prudencio Damboriana, S. J. *La salvación en las religiones no cristianas* (Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1973); J. D. Gort, "Anonymous Christianity: Its Context and Implications for Mission" (London: Evangelical Fellowship of Missionary Studies, 1970), (mimeographed); Carl F. Hallencreutz, *New Approaches to Men of Other Faiths*, Research Pamphlet No. 18 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1970); John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1973); *Idem*, ed., *Truth and Dialogue: The Relationship Between World Religions* (London: Sheldon Press, 1974); Leslie Newbigin, *The Finality of Christ* (London: SCM, 1969); R. Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (New York: Maryknoll, 1973); *Idem*,

reconciliation communicated to "every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1:23). Mission is, specifically, the fulfillment of this mandate; it is a response to the human quest for wholeness: freedom, community and hope.

### *Missiology as a Contextual Reflection*

Since God's word of reconciliation has been spoken in history, it must be communicated in the tumultuous crossroads of human society. The proclamation of the gospel takes place in the midst of the tensions and challenges, the conflicts and confusion, the ambiguities and endeavors of human history. It is not an isolated event; it mingles in with all of human life.

This is why missiology is concerned not just with the specificity of mission (the specific sharing of the gospel with the world and its concrete responses), but with its overall setting; its context and environment. As it has been noted, this involves the entire life of the church, which means the entire life of society, since the church is an indisputable, though admittedly distinct, part of society. Whatever else it is — the body of Christ, the community of the Spirit, the people of God —, it is a human institution, composed of concrete human beings and affected by all of the challenges and forces of life.

To reflect critically on the crossroads of mission is not only to analyze and evaluate the meaning, effectiveness, obstacles and possibilities of the witnessing engagement of the believing community, but to think critically about the *context* of that engagement; about the multiple crossroads *in the midst of which* the missionary encounter takes place. This is why chapters two and three dealt with the contextual framework of missiology in Latin America.

*The Internal Context.* In chapter two, attention was focused on that segment of Latin American Christianity with which this work

*The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964); Karl Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions," *Theological Investigations*, Vol. 5 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966); H. R. Schlette, *Towards a Theology of Religions* (London, 1966); W. C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind* (New York, 1964); M. M. Thomas, *Man and the Universe of Faiths* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1975); *Idem*, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (London: SCM Press, 1969); Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions* (New York, 1963); J. Verkuyl, *Inleiding*, pp. 460-504.

has been specifically concerned, namely, Protestantism and, particularly, its Mainline variant. In addition to the latter, there were two further types identified: the Evangelical and the Pentecostal.

There are those who may object especially to the criteria used for determining types one (Mainline) and two (Evangelical). They might want to point to John Mackay's comment that Latin American Protestants have chosen to call themselves "evangelicals" rather than "protestants" because they not only "prefer to affirm positively their religious faith and identity, rejecting the term 'protestant' (which by association has come to denote sectarianism), but also [because] in so doing they point to the fundamental reason and spirit of unity that undergirds the Gospel of Christ."<sup>3</sup>

But as Mackay's contention itself demonstrates the term "evangelical" has its roots in situations of polemics and controversy. In the Reformation, it was used as a descriptive mark for those who claimed faithfulness to the gospel: the "true Christians" (Lutherans and Calvinists) as over against the "pseudo-Christians" (the "Papists" or Roman Catholics).<sup>4</sup> In Asia and Africa, the term has come to designate those who want to disassociate themselves from the mainline theology of the established Protestant churches.<sup>5</sup>

These are the two conceptual roots from which are derived the meaning and significance of the term "evangelical" as used in Latin America. In the early history of Protestantism, it was used affirmatively, it is true, but no less polemically, to give an "evangelical" (*i.e.*, true to the gospel and kerygmatic) identity to the type of Christianity that was being advocated and which would be clearly disassociated from the "ritualistic" and "pseudo-Christian" faith of the established Roman Catholic Church. More recently, as has been pointed out in chapter II, the term "evangelical" has been used in similar ways in relation to Mainline Protestant theology.

Some thinkers (*e.g.* Rubem Alves) have argued that the only real

3. John Mackay, *The Latin American Churches and the Ecumenical Movement* (New York: CCLA, 1963), p. 23. See also Pérez-Rivas, "Ecumenismo," in Goodall, *Movimiento ecuménico*, p. 214.

4. For a discussion on the usage of the word "evangelical" during the Reformation, see John W. Stott, *Christ the Controversialist*, pp. 27-32.

5. Thus, for example, in India there is an Evangelical Fellowship of India; in Africa there is an Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar, and so on.

difference between Protestants is ideological. They hold that there are only two types of Protestants in Latin America: those who advocate change and those who do not. Most recently, Míguez-Bonino has identified a third type, namely, those who take a middle-of-the-road position. He has also allowed for a socio-denominational distinction between Protestants and has pointed out two traditional missiological camps: those who have seen mission as "civilization" (social improvement) and those for whom mission has to do basically with the evangelization of individuals.

This work has been predicated upon the conviction that there is also a fundamental historico-theologico-ecumenical frontier which has not been taken into account in other typologies and which gives sufficient ground for a distinction between a Mainline (traditional or historical) and an Evangelical type of Protestantism. The latter includes, to be sure, many Mainliners. But its insistence on the normative authority of Scripture in matters of faith and practice, the experiential character of faith (conversion), its traditional evangelistic commitment and refusal to accept all Mainline Protestants as Evangelicals, plus the direct or indirect ties which many of the Mainline churches and continental organizations have had with the World Council of Churches (which has been the object of much ill-founded criticism from many Evangelical groups and organizations) — all of this is convincing evidence that Mainliners and Evangelicals constitute two distinct variants of the Latin American Protestant movement.

These different varieties of Protestant Christianity make necessary their treatment as particular units. Only in critically analyzing the particular can we begin to understand the totality. The particular approach, thus, has been followed in order to arrive at a global vision of contemporary Protestant missiology. This implies, however, that the present study will need to be followed by two additional works on Evangelical and Pentecostal missiologies respectively. This would then give us a broad enough basis to undertake a comparative analysis of Protestant and Catholic missiology.

Mainline Protestantism was chosen as the starting point because of the leadership and influence which it has exercised not only in the Protestant community but in relation to all of Latin American Christianity. It is precisely in the realm of a mission-oriented theological

reflection that Mainline Protestants have made their greatest contribution to the church.

*The External Context.* This particular study has been limited to six of more than 100 years' history of Protestantism and the five centuries' history of Latin American Catholicism. The year 1969 was chosen as the starting point because of the historical significance of this period, the bulk of material produced in the course of these years and the author's concern for what is actually taking place *now* rather than yesterday. If, as it has been said, missiology is a science of the crossroads, it must be concerned with the present. The past must be learned from and the future must be looked to, but the emphasis must fall on the present task of mission.

Chapter III dealt with the global continental reality and the leading issues, movements and events that made of our period of study such a crucial moment in the history of Latin American Christianity. This situation makes up the external context, or the continental crossroads, in the midst of which Mainline Protestants have endeavored to witness to the Christian faith and out of which have emerged the documents analyzed in parts II and III. The awareness of this convulsed environment helps us to understand why the materials analyzed make no pretensions to finality. They represent reflections en route, a missiology in the making, a living, dynamic and challenging (even if provisional and, at times, incoherent by traditional standards) theology.

### MISSION AS A DEBT

The situation which predominated in Latin America at the end of the 60's accounts for what was described in Part II as "a new consciousness" within the Protestant community. Latin American Protestants could not help but be affected by the new and growing continental-wide understanding of the Latin American reality, its present, past and future. Such an understanding was, of course, conflictive in nature. It was not homogeneous. There were and there continue to be discrepancies in the Latin American perception of reality. Some saw things through spectacles of fear, were threatened by a challenging present, controlled by a domesticating and secure past, and traumatized by an uncertain future. Others, moved by a vision of a new world that rejected an oppressive past, were impatient with the present. Yet others, though aware of the evils of the

past and conscious of the need of a new future, were held back by the comfort of their own present. None, however, could deny that they were living in a challenging hour.

Thus, when Latin American Protestants came together for the celebration of the III CELA, they saw themselves as debtors of this continent that asks for its due. Almost ten years had past since their last continental gathering. The conflicts of the Continent had made necessary the postponement of the Conference and its displacement from Río de Janeiro to Buenos Aires. There were fears that the Conference would embarrass Brazilian Protestant leaders, bringing out to the open the ideological conflict within the Brazilian churches.

### *The Missiological Guilt of Mainline Protestantism*

The III CELA, far from being representative of all of Protestantism and far from constituting a legislative event, provided, nevertheless, an inventory of what was taking place in Protestant Christianity. In the course of the 60's Protestants had developed a new consciousness as to their missionary situation. Great feelings of guilt as to the lack of adequate Protestant participation in the life of Latin American society were voiced by the participants. They acknowledged their foreignness and underscored the challenge of indigenization. They took notice of the socio-economico-political crisis of the Continent and recognized their responsibility to participate redemptively in the continental struggle for liberation. They saw the need for greater cooperation, for a more relevant ministry among the youth and women and for a militant, comprehensive, yet deeper proclamation of the gospel.

### *The Missiological Ambiguities of Mainline Protestantism*

But the III CELA was not without its ambiguities. It revealed a new line of controversy among Protestant Christians, namely, that of different politico-ideological views. Its analysis of the Latin American situation was much too general and superficial. It did not touch upon the concrete causal factors behind the backwardness, underdevelopment, injustice and violence which exists throughout the Continent. It suffered from a lack of ecclesiological clarity and ecumenical depth. Beyond that, it did not deal with the specific evangelistic challenge of the hour. Though it gave voice to a great concern over the problem of Protestant divisions, urban migrations, the youth and women, its only move toward the development of a viable



continental plan of action was its endorsement of UNELAM and its referral to the latter of the suggestion of regional conferences between the churches. In this respect, it was fortunate that the plenary session did not even bother to reflect upon the strategic possibilities of the other continental agencies represented nor make any referrals of problems related to their area of concern. The new consciousness with which Latin American Protestants entered the 70's was thus full of discrepancies.

### MISSION AS CONCRETE ACTION

Following the III CELA, Mainline Protestant missiology took simultaneously a threefold course. In the first place, it wrestled with the question of concreteness in mission. This struggle was witnessed at the national and continental level, in the churches as well as in the leading ecumenical organizations. It appeared in the form of a quest for a greater participation in God's mission in terms relevant to the concrete needs, issues and concerns of the socio-cultural context.

#### *Action and Reaction*

In our exploration of this first missiological path, we focused on several churches which reflected, in varying degrees, a concern for a more meaningful participation in the life and struggles of their respective societies. The most notable example was that of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia, which in the course of its short history, as an autonomous church, has demonstrated not only a tremendous vitality in its impressive numerical growth, structural development and quality of service but also in the formulation of a "theory of missionary praxis" which has caught the attention of the international Protestant community for its holistic and concrete approach to Christian mission. A similar, though less thorough, search for a more concrete missionary obedience was detected in the other churches considered.

Unfortunately, this quest did not go beyond the boundaries of these churches themselves. In far too many, there was an inverse process. Led by a reactionary leadership which staunchly refused to reflect upon the challenge of the Latin American crossroads, these churches embarked on a retreat from those programmatic areas where critical decisions and defined positions were demanded and began to disassociate themselves from any Christian organization or group of persons which opted for a greater engagement in mission. How to

maintain a creative and critical dialogue between the leadership of both types of churches is one of the crucial, if not the most crucial, missiological challenges of Mainline Protestantism in the mid-seventies.

### *Action Without Strategy*

In the case of an ecumenical organization like UNELAM, its limited constituency and the responsibility entrusted to it at the III CELA made it indispensable to seek a more concrete, operational base. This meant, on the one hand, a search for greater support at the grass-roots level, which implied, specifically, an attempt to recruit more national churches and continental-wide cooperative organizations. It meant, on the other hand, refining its programmatic content so as to deal with the concrete issues facing the church in Latin America and, therefore, justify its existence as a relevant continental-wide ecumenical body.

UNELAM, however, has reflected on both fronts two fundamental weaknesses: its inability to develop an ecclesologically cohesive and efficient staff and its lack of a clear, well grounded strategy. This has made it appear to be an organization with a split personality, which in spite of the backing it got from the III CELA and the excellent projects it has sponsored, has not been able to help Mainline Protestantism overcome its missiological disparities. One of the crucial problems with which the IV CELA will have to cope is as follows: Will it be possible to develop a clear and well-thought out strategy that will open the way for a concrete and effective programmatic action, without, at the same, forcing a thorough overhaul of an umbrella-type organization like UNELAM? Or will it be forced to do away with it, so that a more ecclesologically comprehensive and indigenous body with a clearer missiological focus can emerge in Latin American Protestantism?

### *Critical Action*

For CELADEC, the quest for concreteness has led to a dialectical relationship with its ecclesiastical constituency. Reacting against the closed educational structure that it sees throughout Protestant Christianity it has pushed for an educational task directed toward the world, supported by a theology committed to the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed Latin American masses and guided by an educational methodology based on a continuous confrontation with concrete reality.

Such an educational perspective has led CELADEC in two directions. On the one hand, it has become critically engaged in the educational process of contemporary Latin America through the promotion and stimulation of a problem-posing education whereby the educator and the educated participate in a common search for the transformation of their historical situation. On the other, it has sought critically to penetrate the inner life of the congregation so as to provoke it to undergo a change in lifestyle, from a community that lives in service of its own self-affirmation into one which is totally committed to the world. It is in this latter direction that CELADEC's biggest opportunity lies to contribute effectively to the missiological renewal of contemporary Protestantism.

Yet CELADEC has several serious problems to resolve. The chiefest of these is the contradiction between its role as a commission of the churches and its growing effort to be a counter-church movement. This is making it appear more and more to be an organization with a split personality. It may very well be that in the contradictory situation of Mainline Protestant Christianity, CELADEC could keep both roles in a creative tension and, thus, be able to contribute effectively to the transformation of significant sectors in the churches. But CELADEC could also turn out to be just one more victim to fall into the hands of the reactionary forces in Mainline Protestantism. This is why its greatest challenge is the fortification of the bridge connecting it with the ecclesiastical structures. A weakening of its communication link with the latter could very well become the beginning of the end.

### *Radical Action*

As to ISAL, its quest for greater concreteness in the praxis of faith has been shaped by a vigorous effort critically to understand socially, economically and politically the global Latin American reality as well as its own task in the midst of that reality. It has also taken the form of a commitment to the development of a theology of the poor. It has been marked by the rediscovery of the church, not only as a field for political action and as a strategic and tactical instrument in the cause of liberation, but also as a community with an historical mission to the universal church, a mission which can be understood and fulfilled only in terms of vigorous pastoral action.

It is perhaps within the context of institutional Christianity that lies ISAL's greatest significance. As an avant-garde movement, ISAL

has voiced, together with other similar Christian groups, not only stern criticism of institutional Christianity (both in its Catholic and Protestant variants) but also has proposed new missionary alternatives for the Christian faith in Latin America. Beyond this, the consistent — and at times questionable — radicality of its praxis and its insistence on divesting itself of its Protestant heritage and identity in order to become a supraconfessional organization of militant Christians made it one of the most forceful contributors to the second issue that Mainline Protestant missiology faced during the period of study, namely, that of a more authentic expression of Christian ecumenicity.

### MISSION AS AUTHENTIC ECUMENISM

The rise of the question of authentic ecumenism is the result of the failure of the traditional ecumenical structures (the majority of the national councils of churches) to cope with the missionary situation of Latin America. Not being able to provide the necessary missiological leadership, they made inevitable a critical process that unmasked their fundamental weakness: their imported and, therefore, foreign character. The search for a more authentic expression of the one faith in Christ became, accordingly, the second course of action that Mainline Protestant missiology followed in the post III CELA period. This quest took several forms.

#### *The Search for Authenticity: Bridge-building*

One such form was that of building bridges of communication between the various sectors of Protestantism, between Catholics and Protestants and between Christians and non-Christians. The first of these bridge-building efforts was represented by the Associations of Theological Institutions, which contributed to the elimination of traditional roadblocks to intra-Protestant cooperation by helping the major theological schools of the Continent to come into closer relationship with one another. They stressed, moreover, the category of mission as a fundamental concept in theological education.

There was also an effort to build a meaningful relation with those who stand outside the limiting frontiers of Protestantism. The ecumenical efforts of ISAL and ULAJE are examples of this. For them the ecumenical challenge did not lie in the maintenance of an intra-Protestant dialogue, which otherwise had proven to be useless in terms of the crisis of the Continent. The real challenge lay rather in a

joint engagement of all those committed to the process of liberation. Out of this involvement would emerge (and indeed, they insisted that it was already happening) a nonconfessional, human and authentically Latin American ecumenical movement.

A third effort was represented by the ecumenical program of CELADEC and UNELAM. Each of them sought, in varying degrees, to build bridges in both directions: internally, among the three large Protestant sectors, and, externally, with the Catholic Church and those sectors of the nonreligious community engaged in a common search for a new society.

*The Search for Authenticity: Assessing Interchurch Aid*

The search for authentic ecumenism was particularly revealed in the sphere of interchurch aid. It stemmed from the need for a more indigenous, realistic and efficient system of assessing existing and future interchurch aid projects. Out of two separate consultations (held, respectively, in Northeastern Brazil and Guadalupe under the auspices of CICARWS and with the cooperation of several national and continental organizations) two project-screening bodies emerged, which have become the most representative ecumenical organisms in Spanish and Portuguese-speaking Latin America. Of these, CESE, whose sphere of action is limited to Brazil, but which enjoys the official participation of the Brazilian Catholic Church, has revealed heretofore the most ecumenical potential. As for the other, CELAP, it was not until October 1974 that it came to represent all the major areas of Mainline Protestantism. CESE and CELAP have practical problems to solve, however, if they are to live up to their potential. The former has been limited thus far to the field of social action. Progress beyond this area of Christian cooperation is not too promising for the moment, given the numerous ecclesiological barriers that have stood in the way of Roman Catholic participation in the Ecumenical Movement. CELAP, while having a larger range of concern on account of its larger project-screening function *vis à vis* CICARWS, has yet to consolidate its recently won approval from the WCC-member churches. Beyond this, it would seem that both these organizations will need to work out an understanding in the immediate future so that CELAP projects relating to Brazil do not overlap with those of CESE.

*The Search for Authenticity: Theological Reassessment of the Idea of Unity*

The search for authentic ecumenism also appeared, thirdly, in a more systematic form, thus introducing a second missiological moment. The first (that reflection which is present in the working out of particular problems, which leads to specific decisions and directly affects the church's life in mission) can be said to have taken place in the bridge-building efforts described above and in the historical development of organizations like CESE and CELAP. The second moment involves a more systematic reflection on those issues brought out in the first. In the case at hand, it involves a theological reconsideration of the meaning of the Ecumenical Movement in Latin America.

At the very heart of this reconsideration lies the notion of praxis as a central *locus* of Christian unity. Authentic ecumenism has thus been interpreted to be that activity which leads the "true" church to concerted, efficacious participation in God's redemptive mission in the concrete Latin American situation. This implies a struggle for *true* unity as well as for the *true* church. But, can such a dialectical ecumenical ecclesiology stand the test of theology? This is the task that Míguez-Bonino has undertaken in his ecumenical writings.

Especially in his reflections since the III CELA, Míguez has underscored the analogous and critical character of the notion of church and unity as well as the historico-ideological context out of which the Ecumenical Movement sprang. This being so, it should be no surprise that in Latin America "conflict" would be considered to be basic to the experience of unity. At the same time, Míguez has raised a safeguard against the danger of absolutizing the reality of conflict by pointing out a series of theological tasks that need to be undertaken in the search for an authentic ecumenism. He has also stressed the importance of hermeneutics in any discussion on the church in order to prevent the aforementioned quest from taking an abstract and spiritualistic turn.

In advocating a theological reconstruction of the notion of ecumenism on the basis of praxis, Míguez has sought to liberate the Ecumenical Movement from its institutional imprisonment and redirect it along the course of mission. It remains to be seen, however, whether the ecumenical struggle in praxis can be really freed of confessional and institutional boundaries.

In spite of the positive theological contribution that Míguez's post-III CELA writings have made toward the clarification of the issues involved in the quest for an authentic ecumenism, he has not been able to move beyond his old "nominalistic strategy" for ecumenism in Latin America. Protestantism in general, and its Mainline variant in particular, has yet to discover a viable response to the most pressing ecumenical problem facing it, namely, how to create a broad platform for a critical dialogue in mission between the churches and Christian groups of the Continent so as to reduce the organizational competition and interchurch strife and make possible a joint reflection on the missionary priorities of the hour.

### MISSION AS UNDERSTANDING

The third patch which Mainline missiology took in the post-III CELA period encompassed the search for a deeper understanding of God's missionary action in history and the implications of this action for Protestant Christianity in Latin America. This quest was represented by three missiologically oriented studies published during the period covered by our research. Their contribution lies not just in their respective contents, but also in the way in which they have undertaken their missiological task. They not only represent the second missiological moment referred to above, but provide three distinct ways of doing missiology in Latin America.

#### *Understanding the Past*

Justo L. González's work, *Historia de las misiones*, has provided a historical model of missiological reflection. In it, he has invited Latin American Protestants to reflect critically on their missionary praxis through the medium of the history of the Christian world mission.

#### *Understanding the Pastoral Ministry*

In the case of Emilio Castro's *Hacia una pastoral latinoamericana*, missiology has taken the form of pastoral theology. Castro has underscored the importance of an effective pastoral leadership in the church's participation in God's mission. In so doing, he has placed the pastoral task within the missionary process, thereby making pastoral theology a part of missiology and not the other way around, as it is often the case.

#### *Understanding Salvation Today*

The third case-study, that of Mortimer Arias' *Salvación es liber-*

*acción*, has taken missiology into the realm of biblical and systematic theology. It probes into the content and goal of the Christian faith in the light of the contemporary situation of the human race.

None of these three studies is a finished product. Notwithstanding the fact that they were undertaken more systematically than many of the other documents analyzed, they, too, represent en route reflections. They show, however, that missiology in Latin American Protestantism is not a theological appendix<sup>6</sup> but rather constitutes a fundamental part of theological reflection. Indeed, it not only occupies a central role in the church's reflection but also in its life in mission.

If the latter is so, however, missiology must then not only *emerge out* of mission but also *lead to* mission. It must be able to point out the missionary challenges *before* the church and to map out a course of action. These are the two remaining tasks that lie ahead in the present study.

6. As José Comblin claims is the case of traditional Catholic missiology. According to him, missiology has been but an "application of the ecclesiology destined to give the specialized personnel in [the so-called 'mission territories'] the convenient ideology." (Cf. *Teología de la misión*, p. 7.) It must be bore in mind, nevertheless, as Comblin's own works show, that contemporary Catholic missiology is no longer restricted to a reflection related to the work of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Indeed it has come to affect the total life of the Catholic Church, since the whole church is in a missionary situation, as the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, and the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, *Ad Gentes*, so clearly state.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE CHALLENGE OF MISSION

The Latin American church is living in a challenging moment. That this challenge affects the entire Christian church and not just the Protestant wing or its Mainline variant is clearly reflected by the following facts: (1) The documents analyzed in the foregoing chapters are filled with numerous references to Catholic theologians and groups. (2) The latter focus their attention on the same reality as that to which Protestant Christianity addresses itself. (3) In several cases these documents even included the direct intervention of Catholics and non-Mainline Protestants. Be that as it may, we shall take one last look at the situation as it appears in Mainline Protestant missiology.

What is the specific missionary challenge which is disclosed, explicitly or implicitly, in the contemporary Mainline Protestant reflection on mission? What are the most pressing issues before Mainline Protestant Christianity? Where must it put its priorities in order faithfully to respond to the challenge of mission in the tumultuous crossroads of contemporary Latin America?

### THE CHALLENGE OF HUMAN LIBERATION

The most obvious challenge stems from the historical moment within which the majority of Latin Americans are consciously living. It deals with their struggle for liberation from the situation of oppression and repression, exploitation and underdevelopment, powerlessness and frustration to which they have been subjected for centuries. It is complicated by the fact that Latin America is the one nonaffluent continent in which the great majority of the population professes to follow him who came to "preach good news to the poor. . . to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk. 4:18-19). This is a continent, nevertheless, in which the institutional representatives of Christ have been guilty of a traditional alliance with the local oligarchies and/or

external powers responsible for the perpetuation of a state of injustice, domination and institutionalized violence.

In the last several years, the institutional church, Catholic and Protestant, has, of course, shown signs of repentance. It has publicly acknowledged, in varying degrees, its share of responsibility for the ills of the Continent and has tried to put itself at the service of the masses.

We know all too well, however, that these good intentions have come far short of the need. True, there have been moments in the last several years when the church has taken heroic stances on behalf of the oppressed. There have been many more times, however, when it has, directly or indirectly, failed to identify itself with the struggling masses and act efficaciously on their behalf. This is one reason, at least, why the Latin American struggle for a more humane society seems to be going backward rather than forward.

The tragedy of this failure can be appreciated if we bear in mind that traditionally Latin American Christianity has been dominated by a mentality oriented toward the justification of the *status quo*. The faithful have been taught to separate reconciliation from the demand of justice. The rich have been permitted to "give to the Lord" with one hand and exploit the poor with the other. The poor have been taught to accept their poverty and exploitation passively. The weak have been encouraged to be politically passive while the strong have been supported in their political aggressiveness.

Even so, there is among the masses signs of latent liberating aspirations. Behind the *fiestas*, "flowers and songs"<sup>1</sup> and football games there is the passionate determination of a people who refuse to die, who cultivate, even in their imagination, a far away but nevertheless

1. An expression borrowed from Walter Hollenweger's case study of the religiosity of Mexican Pentecostal *campesinos*. According to Hollenweger, the *Iglesia Cristiana Independiente Pentecostés* has kept alive the educational methodology of the ancient *Nahuatl* civilization for whom the "educational medium was not the manual or textbook but poetry." Hollenweger adds that according to the *tlamatini* (the wiseman or key figure in the system) "...no one [on the earth] can declare the truth, ... except perhaps through 'flowers and songs.' If they wanted to be precise they did not call for sharper definitions but described what they meant by referring to two of its most remarkable features (*difrasismo*). For example, they described a woman as 'skirt and blouse,' a city as 'water and hill' and the transcendence of God as 'night and wind'..." *Pentecost Between Black and White*, pp. 35, 36.

real dream of a new tomorrow, more human, fulfilling and wholesome. Little wonder that the ruling national oligarchies and their foreign partners invest so much money, time and mental strength in the maintenance of brutal repressive apparatus. Machine guns and tanks, economic boycotts and physical tortures may reduce the vision of a new tomorrow to silent sighings, but they cannot extinguish it. In fact, if anything, they help to cultivate the seed of change by sharpening the imagination. As Rubem Alves has said:

Suffering prepares the soul for vision. Personality refuses to take things as they are. It spreads its wings and the heart emigrates to the horizons of the future. Imagination is born, and with it the ideal future that the community of suffering engenders out of its own existential situation.<sup>2</sup>

If Alves is correct in saying that the present moment is not a time for "political confrontation" but for laying the "seed" of change,<sup>3</sup> then it becomes quite evident that the most relevant way to respond to the challenge of human liberation is through the strengthening of the pastoral action of the church. This requires, however, at least in Protestant circles,<sup>4</sup> a transformation in the traditional understanding of Pastoral theology and action. In effect, what is needed is a socio-pastoral praxis,<sup>5</sup> whereby the church is seen as a pastoral community whose "parish" is "the world."<sup>6</sup> strengthened, motivated and mobilized by leaders equally committed to standing in solidarity with and engaged in the service of the world.

One of the most pertinent contributions which the Latin American church can make to the quest for a new tomorrow is to proclaim,

2. Alves, *Tomorrow's Child*, p. 201.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

4. This is an area in which the Catholics have gone much further than the Protestants. Indeed, they have developed a socio-pastoral discipline. This is not just a different way of referring to what Protestants have called social ethics or church and society. Rather it is a *pastoral* perspective of the social responsibility of the church. Cf., among others, Segundo Galilea, *Información teológica y pastoral sobre América Latina* (Bogotá: Secretariado General de la CLAR, 1974), pp. 9-53, 85-92; "Información sobre el Instituto Pastoral del CELAM," *Medellín: Teología y pastoral para América Latina*, I:1 (Marzo 1975), 83-90.

5. On this, see further my essay "Hacia una pastoral evangélica para el hombre latinoamericano," in *El protestantismo*, pp. 77ff.

6. In the same work, see chapter IV ("El mundo es mi parroquia") where I deal with the place which the world should occupy in the missionary action of the Latin American church. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-141.

without reductions or apologies, the gospel of liberating hope so as to help these masses cultivate the expectations of a new day. Such a proclamation must take flesh in concrete acts. It must heal, restore and quicken the understanding so as to enable the suffering masses "to pluck and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow" the objective and subjective, institutional and personal causes behind their oppressive situation and help them to participate in the building and planting (cf. Jer. 1:10) of a more free, fraternal and peaceful society.

But is such a socio-pastoral action possible without a transformation in the prevailing scheme of pastoral theology? As was pointed out in a consultation held in Antigua, Guatemala on May 1974; Pastoral theology in Latin America is in crisis because "the pastorate" has been limited to the professional clergyman and to an intracongregational function. This is helped little by the theological educational institutions which are, with few exceptions, geared to the formation of clergy oriented toward the maintenance and preservation of the institutional church rather than the equipping of the people of God for a relevant ministry in the world. Little wonder that the participants in the aforementioned Consultation "felt that the majority of existing [theological educational] institutions were not capable of introducing the radical curricular changes" needed for the development of a new pastoral leadership capable of training the faithful to exercise a prophetic-paradigmatic leadership in the present situation of captivity of Latin America.<sup>7</sup> The total community of faith, and not just its professional leaders, is called to exercise a pastoral ministry in the world. It must take the lead, serve, care for, teach, comfort and guide, personally and corporately, in faith, hope and love, the oppressed majorities into a new society. This pastoral leadership cannot be exercised in quiet, undisturbed and safe installations. Rather, as Enrique Dussel reminds us, it must take place in a situation of poverty, helplessness and openness to God and neighbor. "Only that person who will have faith, in the sense of knowing how to open himself or herself to the revealing word of God and discover

7. Orlando E. Costas, "Dateline Guatemala" [An abridged report on the Central American Protestant Consultation on the Pastoral Dimension of the Diaconate Ministry of the Church, 16-19 May, 1974], *World Vision*, 18:7 (July-August, 1974), 18-19. (Unabridged version in *Occasional Essays* (San José: Publicaciones INDEF), (mimeographed).).

its concrete meaning, will be able to" discern the path of liberation and lead others to it.<sup>8</sup>

This means, accordingly, that believers need to be helped to think critically on the meaning of the present historical moment, learn how to discern God's activity in history and to provide a prophetic leadership in the world. To do so, there must be a radical change in the pattern of leadership formation. Theological education must become pastoral, engaging and concrete. That is, it must seek "to relate the theological understanding of world realities to the ongoing life of the Christian community,"<sup>9</sup> not from a detached, ivory-tower situation, but from within a concrete socio-pastoral engagement. Only a theological educational experience turned and tuned to the world in the spirit of Christ will generate the type of leadership that will awaken the missionary conscience of the people of God. This means, moreover, that the people of God need not just to be challenged, but *taught* the way of mission. They must be helped patiently, lovingly, understandingly and sacrificially to overcome personal, ideological and religious hang-ups. Only an effective *pastoral leadership* will turn out a *pastoral community*. This is the perennial example set by Jesus Christ, and "A disciple is not above his teacher, not a servant above his master. . ." (Mt. 10:24).

### THE CHALLENGE OF EVANGELIZATION

An equally relevant challenge is that of evangelization. By evangelization I mean the witness which the people of God bear to the gospel, in word or deed, among the peoples of the earth, their subsequent invitation to experience, through faith in Christ, the salvation which the gospel proclaims and to become active components of the community of faith. It is what has been referred to heretofore as the specificity of mission. This challenge has a twofold dimension.

The Christian mandate to evangelize the world, when considered in the light of the totality of the contemporary situation, poses a *quantitative* problem for Latin American Christianity. After five centuries of Christian endeavor, there are still far too many people who

8. Enrique Dussel, *Caminos de liberación latinoamericana*, Tomo I: *Teología de la liberación e historia* (Buenos Aires: Latinoamérica Libros, 1975<sup>3</sup>), p. 18.

9. Emilio Castro, "Salvation Today at Bangkok and After," *Study Encounter*/75, XI:2 (1975), 8.

stand outside the frontiers of the faith throughout the breadth and length of this continent.

There are millions who confess to be religiously Christian, but have never personally experienced the gospel. In the words of Bishop Samuel Ruíz-García, they have been baptized but lack "a conscious and mature faith." Accordingly, they "go through life without being truly converted to the Gospel, without a personal encounter with and commitment to Jesus the Saviour."<sup>10</sup>

There is another sector which stands formally outside of Catholic and Protestant Christianity, professing a sub-Christian faith. They are found in such Afro-religious movements as Macumba, Candomble and Umbanda in Brazil and Voodoo in Haiti. They are, perhaps, the "most pathetic testimony of the fact that Christianity has been incapable of satisfying the needs of the masses on the fringes of society."<sup>11</sup>

A third group could be classified as post-Christian. They are represented by a small but seemingly increasing trend toward no religious commitment whatever. This is perfectly illustrated by the results of the 1970 Religious Census of Chile, made public in 1974. According to Humberto Muñoz,<sup>12</sup> from 1960 to 1970 those who identified themselves as having no religious belief whatever went from 5 per cent to 12.75 per cent. Add to this the small number of Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist adherents and there is a total of 12.96 per cent *professing non-Christians*. This is but an example, from one of the few countries that includes in its official census a religious section, of how serious the evangelistic challenge of Latin America really is.

10. The Most Rev. Samuel Ruíz-García, "Evangelization in Latin America," in *Médelin* I, p. 160.

11. Enrique Guang Tapia, "Teología y violencia en América Latina: Análisis socio-teológico," (unpublished thesis for the degree of *Licenciado en Teología*, Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano, 1971), p. 86. Cf. also the following: Willik, "Cristo nos cultos Afro-Brasileiros," in *Cristo no Brasil*, pp. 148ff.; Julio De Santa Ana, *Cristianismo sin religión* (Montevideo: Editorial Alfa, 1969), pp. 11ff.; Buenaventura Kloppenburg, "El problema de las sectas en el contexto ecuménico," in CELAM, VII: 77-78 (enero-febrero de 1974), pp. 7ff.; and Segundo Galilea, *Introducción a la religiosidad latinoamericana*, No. 2 of *Estudios sobre pastoral popular* (Quito: Departamento de Pastoral C.E.L.A.M., IPLA, n.d.), pp. 7ff.

12. Humberto Muñoz, "La fe de los chilenos," *El mercurio*, 27 de octubre de 1974, p. 27.

To the millions who professing to be Christians lack a personal experience with Christ, the millions who have embraced a sub-Christian faith and the increasing number of people who openly declare themselves non-Christians, must be added those who have physically never heard the gospel or have not had a reasonable opportunity to consider it as a genuine option for their lives. This applies to Indian tribes in Brazil, Chile, the Andean countries, Colombia and Middle America.<sup>13</sup> They constitute a challenging evangelistic frontier because having been so geographically near to the Christian faith, they have been removed for centuries beyond the reach of its missionary endeavor.

There are those, however, who question the validity of any further evangelistic penetration among the Indians of Latin America. This was the case of the group of anthropologists who met in Barbados in January, 1971 to consider the "interethnic conflict" in South America. In their final statement, they criticized evangelistic efforts among the Indians as "religious pretexts" to justify "the economic and human exploitation of the aboriginal population." Accordingly, they recommended "the suspension of all missionary activities" as "the most appropriate policy on behalf of Indian society as well as the moral integrity of the churches involved."<sup>14</sup>

While the church's share of responsibility in the history of exploitation of the aboriginal population cannot be denied, the radical demand of the Barbados Declaration must be challenged on account of the church's still pending debt to the aborigines. Indeed, their evangelization is a five centuries long commitment which the Christian faith has had to the Continent. For the church to retreat from this task when there are still so many that have yet to have at least a chance to consider the redemptive message of Jesus Christ as an option for their lives is to betray the church's very calling, not only *to be a living word* (cf. "living stones," 1 Pet. 2:4) in the world, but *to proclaim* "the wonderful deeds of him" who called it "out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

But the challenge of the unevangelized does not end with the

13. For a list of unevangelized Indian tribes in Latin America, see the study that the Missions Advanced Center conducted for the International Congress on World Evangelization: *Unreached Peoples Directory* (Monrovia, California: MARC, 1974).

14. "Declaration of Barbados," IRM, LXII:247 (July 1973), 270, 271.

unreached of the Continent. For the church has been called to witness unto the uttermost parts of the earth, proclaiming the gospel to all of creation (Acts 1:8; Mk. 16:15; Mt. 28:19). Can the fact that Asia, which comprises two thirds of the inhabitable earth, is overwhelmingly non-Christian remain much longer a matter of little concern for the church of Jesus Christ in Latin America? Can this church remain unmoved by the fact that there are still many unevangelized regions in Africa or that the old centers of missionary action are undergoing a rapid process of paganization<sup>15</sup>? Indeed, the Latin American Christian church is as much a debtor to those who are afar as to those who are near.

Immediately we find ourselves up against the *qualitative* dimension. The unevangelized are not an abstraction. They are concrete human beings in varying historical circumstances. They live in "homogeneous units." These units are, of course, also heterogeneous; they multiply content-wise endlessly. Thus, within an ethnic group there may be subunits of an economic, family, politico-ideological, educational and religious nature which may have direct or indirect links with other ethnic units or subunits. When we pose the quantitative question (how many are not yet saved), we have to look around for these units and subunits, because that is where people are to be found. People are then lost *in relation to their group setting*. Isn't this, at least in part, the meaning of the biblical notion of peoplehood in connection with world evangelization (Cf. Mt. 28:19, "nations")? In other words, the personal state of people outside of Christ is linked to their socio-cultural context. When people are lost, they are lost as members of particular groups. Thus, Jesus commands to disciple the "nations."<sup>16</sup> And it is in this same context that we must understand the mourning of the tribes of the earth and the second coming of Christ (Cf. Mt. 24:30) and the worshipping multitude "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues" (cf. Rev. 7:9ff.).

People are not only lost in their socio-cultural contexts, but also in degrees. Of course, we must never lose sight of the sharpness of the biblical notions of "being" and "not-being" in Christ. There is a

15. Cf. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "Evangelism in the Neo-Pagan Situation," IRM, LXIII:249 (January, 1974), 81-86.

16. Cf. Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "ἔθνος in the NT," TDNT, II, PP. 369.



cutting, radical difference between being lost and being saved that does not allow for any degrees. One is either "in Christ" or one is not.

But... we must not forget such passages as Rom. 1:24ff. and 2 Cor. 3:18. There are levels of perdition just as there are degrees of experiencing salvation. There are those who are "near" and those who are "far off" (cf. Eph. 2:17) just as salvation is experienced as a constant change into the likeness of Christ "from one degree of glory to another. . ." (2 Cor. 3:18).

What does this mean in the context of evangelization?

It means, on the one hand, that we need to be *aware* of the spiritual state of people. We need to know what are their situations of sin, for "sin. . . brings forth death" (Jas. 1:15). There is a correspondence between sin and repentance just as much as there is between sin and lostness. The forms which repentance from sin takes vary in accordance with the situation of sin. To the adulterous woman Jesus said, "go, and do not sin again" (Jn. 8:11), but to the rich young ruler he said, "Sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor. . . and come, follow me" (Lk. 18:22)! Likewise, there are those whose sins have so blinded them that their hearts have become hardened, so that seeing, they do not perceive, and hearing, they do not understand (Jn. 12:38ff.).

This means, furthermore, that some groups are harder to reach than others. Their situation is so much more complicated; their level of religious understanding is so much lower; their resistance to the gospel is, therefore, so much more stronger, that one must have much patience, endurance and faith in their evangelization.

Moreover, the qualitative question confronts the evangelized, *yet unreached areas* in the church's life too. In the OT, the prophets were constantly calling Israel to the renewal of its vows, to repent from its sins and be *converted* to Yahweh! In the NT, while the term conversion is primarily used in reference to the new birth, it is also used, together with other similar terms (e.g., repentance), in relation to believers. Why? Because there is a sense in which the church has to be constantly reached. As Alfred Krass has suggested, there are many in the church "Who have (partially) heard the gospel and (partially) accepted Christ as Lord."<sup>17</sup> In fact, all confessing

17. Alfred Krass, "Lausanne '74 - Reaching the Unreached," in *Beautiful Feet*, IV:1 (August, 1974), 4.

Christians fall in one way or another in this category. Accordingly, we "always need to be listening for 'more light and truth to break forth from God's holy word.'" <sup>18</sup>

This is why in the previous section, we referred to the *conversion of the church* from its sins against the poor of the Continent. Because there are times and situations when the church falls into disbelief, when its life and mission becomes corrupted and it becomes deaf to God's word. This state of functional disbelief, which in traditional Evangelical-Protestant language has often been referred to as "backsliding" or "apostasy" and the rightening of which has been referred to in recent times as "spiritual renewal," must be seen in the context of the contemporary challenge of evangelization. Because a church which loses touch with its source of strength (the Word and the Spirit), a community which loses sight of the object of its mission (the world and, particularly, the poor); a people that are unresponsive to the demands of the gospel, "cannot be the salt of the earth. . . [and] the light of the world. . . ." Indeed, such a church "is trapped in its own blindness, its own captivity . . . [therefore,] it has to be liberated in order to be a liberating agent in the world."<sup>19</sup>

The challenge of evangelization before contemporary Latin American Protestant Christianity may, perhaps, be best summarized in what J. Verkuyl has rightly called "the central-most questions facing [the entire Christian church] in our time," namely:

Where in this world at this point in history has the Gospel not yet been communicated? Where must it be communicated anew and afresh? What new interchurch strategies and methods of approach must be developed to make possible and facilitate this (re)new(ed) communication?

Now that the 'homebase' is 'everywhere', these questions must engage Christians everywhere. And a proper, effective fulfillment of this task of communication requires a total, universal, six-continent employment of personnel, money and other resources from within the framework of a totally new missionary élan.<sup>20</sup>

## THE CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE

This leads right into the third and foremost challenge before

18. *Ibid.*

19. Orlando E. Costas, Comment on Conversion in "Symposium Discussion," *Evangelism 1974: A Symposium*, IRM, LXIII:249 (January, 1974), 118.

20. Johannes Verkuyl, "Letter to the Rev. Emilio Castro, Editor, *International Review of Mission*," IRM LXIV:255 (July 1975), 307.

Protestant Christianity in Latin America. It can best be stated in the form of the following questions. What is the future of Latin American Protestantism in general and its Mainline variant in particular? Is there a future for a Protestant tradition in the Christianity of Latin America? Still more important: Is there any future at all for Christianity in Latin America?

Following are four hypotheses which are addresses to the issue raised in these questions. They are offered as points of arrival of our study. As such, they provide a provisional response to the question of the future of the Christian mission in Latin America. These hypotheses, however, are also suggested as points of departure for future action and research. They thus pose a problem whose fundamental solution may only be found in the years to come.

1. Mainline Protestantism has no real, effective future in itself. Its numerical strength represents not more than one fourth of the total Protestant population.<sup>21</sup> Its organizational patterns are by and large imported; its worship is, generally speaking, a transplantation of North American and European liturgical patterns;<sup>22</sup> its institutions are dependent on foreign financial aid; its leadership is mainly in the hands of members of the middle classes;<sup>23</sup> its inner life is static and undynamic; its clergy seems to be rapidly waning and becoming ever more difficult to support; and its constituency has become increasingly polarized on politico-ideological issues.

This explains why, for example, there has been in the last several years a proliferation of divisiveness among Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist churches in several countries, notably Chile, Brazil, Venezuela, Costa Rica and Mexico. A similar pattern has been observed at the level of continental ecumenical agencies.

That these divisions may be positive rather than negative symptoms which may point to the search for a more meaningful expression of the church and its mission in the world, is a consideration of

21. Cf. Read, Monterroso and Johnson, *Church Growth*, pp. 57ff.; Arias, "Arraigo y crecimiento de la iglesia evangélica en América Latina," in "La iglesia en el contexto latinoamericano," p. 5ff. (*Die Hellen Schalten*, p. 19ff.); Klopburg, "El problema de las sectas," p. 9.

22. Cf. my essay "La realidad de la iglesia en América Latina," in *El protestantismo*, pp. 1ff. and Padilla, ed., *Latinoamérica hoy*, pp. 35ff.

23. Cf. Willems, *Followers*, pp. 197ff.; Christian Lalive D'Epinay, *Religión e ideología en una perspectiva sociológica* (Río Piedras: Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico, 1973), pp. 51ff.

little value when seen in the light of the total continental reality. For one thing, this process of proliferation is characteristic of the history of all of Protestantism. For another, it has entailed an extraordinary waste in human and financial resources, which, if anything, has harmed rather than improved the cause of the gospel. It is quite obvious, to me at least, that this process of praxial and ecclesial "purification" has not paved the way for a more faithful and effective Protestant missionary performance.

Of course, it could be argued that in spite of it all Protestantism has experienced a "fantastic" growth in the last decades. But if the results of the 1970 Chilean religious census comes anywhere close to representing the continental reality,<sup>24</sup> the optimistic predictions of Read, Monterroso and Johnson in 1967, namely, that Protestant Churches in Latin America "will have more than doubled in communicant membership in the ten-year period between 1960 and 1970 . . . [and that there] is every reason to expect this to happen again in the decade between 1970 and 1980. . ."<sup>25</sup>, will have to be treated with greater caution. Even if this prediction turned out to be correct, however, it would not necessarily mean that our Protestantism was indeed growing; it would simply indicate that it was getting heavier,

24. According to Humberto Muñoz, in the 1960-70 decade, Chilean Protestantism went from 5.58 per cent of the total population to 6.18. This represents an increase of 124,204 (or 22.7 per cent) over the previous decade, "but in no way is it the 100 per cent [that Protestants] had maintained for four decades." ("La fe de los chilenos," p. 27.) In 1956, this same Catholic sociologist had stated that "... if Protestants continue to grow at the same rate, within 50 years the entire country will be Protestant"! (Humberto Muñoz, "Situación del protestantismo en Chile," *Mensaje*, V (1956), 166.)

25. Read, Monterroso and Johnson, *Church Growth*, p. 385. Elsewhere, commenting on Chilean church growth, they state:

"Our calculation as to the number of Evangelicals in Chile is based on the 1960 Chilean government census. . . If the Evangelical Churches have continued to grow at an annual rate of 6.5 per cent since 1960 (which is a conservative estimate), then at mid 1967 there were approximately 649,500. . . (or 6.9 per cent of the population). We estimate the annual growth rate to be 6.5 per cent because from 1930 to 1940 the Evangelical growth rate was 6.45 per cent; from 1940 to 1952, 6.62 per cent; and from 1952 to 1960, 6.6 per cent of the population is low compared to other estimates which run as high as 20 per cent."

These different estimates, however, have been severely criticized by Lalive D'Epinay. He states that "... the data provided by the official censuses constitute the only trustworthy source." (*El refugio*, p. 52.)

"fatter," to use the expression of Pastor Juan Carlos Ortíz of Buenos Aires.<sup>26</sup> For growth, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>27</sup> is a much more complex phenomenon than mere numbers. It involves the internal, organic development of the church as well as its reflection on the faith and its involvement in the socio-economico-political struggles of society. And when all of these aspects are taken into account, the so-called "fantastic" growth of Latin American Protestantism becomes subject to serious doubt.

It is a fact, nevertheless, that Protestantism as a whole constitutes a significant minority which has made important contributions in the past to Latin American society. Within the comprehensive and specific notions of God's mission, Latin American Protestants may, therefore, be able to exercise a meaningful role in the future, provided they put their missionary calling above their particular differences and pull their resources together.

Mainline Protestantism could contribute significantly to this end if it maintains a humble dialogue not only among its various factions, but, especially, with the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches and groups. This implies the willingness to accept their respective traditions on their own basis and to participate sincerely with them on those activities which they consider important in the church's mission. Too often the traditional churches and ecumenical organizations have been guilty of a snobbish attitude toward the Evangelicals and Pentecostals. The former have not hesitated to invite the latter to get involved in issues, programs and activities of concern for Mainliners; but when the traditional churches have been in turn invited by Evangelicals or Pentecostals to participate in, for example, evangelistic or "faith healing" campaigns, the Mainliners have given all sorts of answers -- ranging from a critical questioning of the process of organization to an outright refusal! This is perhaps one of the main reasons behind the refusal of some Evangelical and Pentecostal leaders to invite Mainline leaders to continental gatherings, such as CLADE-'69. Thus, if Mainliners are to make a significant contribution to the future course of Protestant Christianity, they are going to have to earn the right to do so.

It is significant to note the improvement that has already begun to

26. Comment made in an interview at ICOWE. Cf. Stanley Mooneyham, "Acts of the Holy Spirit '74," in *Let The Earth*, p. 433.

27. Cf. my *The Church*, pp. 88-90, 310, 311.

be made in this direction. Perhaps the best example is that of José Míguez-Bonino. No one would deny his critical, even radical, theological position. Yet he is held in such high esteem by Evangelicals that he has been invited to participate in Evangelical continental consultations and symposia on theology and social ethics<sup>28</sup> and is beginning to make an important contribution to the work of the Latin American Theological Fraternity.<sup>29</sup>

To be sure, not all Evangelicals and Pentecostals are ready to open themselves to the contributions of the Mainliners. But there are some who are open and many more are likely to become so given the proper moment. By seeking their fellowship *and* contribution, Mainline churches and organizations could easily find a way to put their resources and experiences at the service of the total Protestant community, thereby getting a chance to make a positive contribution to its future course and, likewise, being enriched by its other components.

2. If the future of Mainline Protestantism lies in the total Protestant community, the latter's future is in continental Christianity. For with the rapid increase in population, the growing process of de-Christianization, the gap between the "official," "popular," "rebel" and "charismatic" churches and the half-hearted commitment of institutional Christianity to the situation of the oppressed, what is ever more surely being put, explicitly or implicitly, to the test in Latin America and around the world is not the credibility of Protestantism or Catholicism, but of Christianity itself. If in a continent of so much material abundance, where the Christian faith has been nominally rooted for so many centuries, so much poverty and exploitation is tolerated, then the chances that the Christian faith will

28. This was especially evident at the First Evangelical Consultation on Social Ethics, which grew out of the CLADE-'69, held in Lima, Perú in July, 1972. Justo L. González was another Mainline theologian who was invited to take part. Their respective contributions appear in Padilla, ed. *Latinoamérica hoy*, pp. 83-118, 151-167.

29. Cf. his contribution to the Second Continental Consultation of the Latin American Theological Fraternity, held in Lima, Perú in December 1972: "El reino de Dios y la historia," in *El reino de Dios y América Latina*, René Padilla, ed. (El Paso: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, 1975), pp. 75-95. Míguez is also scheduled to present a major paper at the Fraternity's forthcoming consultation on "Mission and Unity in Latin America," to be held in Uruguay in March, 1976.

be able to make a *positive* impact in the rest of the poverty stricken world, which is overwhelming non-Christian, are indeed very slim. At stake is nothing less than the very credibility of the gospel before those who have yet to seriously consider it as an option for their lives.

Beyond the testing of the efficacy of the prophetic and paradigmatic dimension of the Christian faith, there is the matter of evangelistic strategy. The challenge of evangelization confronts the Christians of Latin America with the imperative of partnership in mission. Only as the total *Christian* (Catholic and Protestant) community jointly mobilizes its resources — manpower, finances, talents, imagination, contacts and opportunities — will the gospel be able to penetrate the frontiers of nonbelief, in Latin America and around the world. The time is quickly drawing upon the People of God in Latin America, indeed it is already here, when neither Catholics nor Protestants will be able to bear an effective witness for Christ except *as Christians*. The words of Jesus in Jn. 17:21 have become the *sine qua non* of evangelization in Latin America (and around the world). Christians need to join in mission so that the world may be able to believe that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God and, consequently, the hope of humanity.

3. This does not mean that Latin American Christianity must forget the richness of its different traditions. On the contrary, its commitment to a united missionary endeavor will require an openness to its various traditions. For only in an atmosphere of mutual respect for and openness to one another is it possible to join in a common witness to the gospel.<sup>30</sup>

But here is where the problem arises. Unlike other parts of the world, where there are more or less the same number of Catholics and Protestants (*e.g.*, USA, West Germany) or where the Catholic

30. On the question of common witness, see the study documents of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, "Common Witness and Proselytism," *Information Service*, The Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, II:14 (April 1971), 18-23. See also, Comisión Teológica Internacional, "Unidad de la fe y pluralismo teológico," CELAM, No. 74 (Octubre 1973), 6, 10 (English version in *The Tablet* (7 July 1973); photocopy available from the Vatican's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity); and the statement by the RCC Bishops of England and Wales, "Catholics and Joint Evangelization" (photocopy provided by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity).

Church is one among other Christian denominations (e.g., most of Asia and Africa, the Netherlands and Great Britain), in Latin America, the RCC has always been predominant, and for a long time rigidly defended the legitimacy of its hegemony. Protestants, in turn, have seen the RCC as the field to conquer. But now that both are slowly recognizing the field to be the *world*, Protestants and Catholics will need to make some necessary readjustments in their univocal conception of their respective traditions, without watering down their fundamental convictions. How to make these readjustments, to accept one another without denying what is precious to each and to engage in witness in spite of the existing differences, all because of the one faith, love and hope to which we have been called in Christ and the brokenness of this one world – that is the fundamental problem which Latin American Christianity must wrestle with in the years to come.

4. But is there any real future for the Christian faith in Latin America? Yes, provided that it is a revitalized, transformed, transformable and transforming, faith. Indeed, the future of Latin America is intrinsically linked to such a Christianity. For as it has been repeatedly observed, the historical role which Christianity has played in Latin America makes any real effective change in the Continent contingent upon the transformation of Christianity's institutional representatives. Moreover, Latin America's internal problems – psychological and cultural conflicts between the rural and urban areas, ethnic groups, countries and regions; the gap between the older and younger generations; the feeling of guilt, loneliness and/or despair witnessed in millions of alcoholics, drug addicts, prostitutes, homeless children and uncared-for aged; and the growing disintegration of the family – all of these ills are symptoms of man's fundamental alienation from God, himself or herself and his or her neighbor. Thus the relevance of the Christian faith for contemporary Latin America; because it proclaims a timely and needed message:

For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end (Eph. 2:14-16).

This is a challenging hour for the Christian mission in Latin America. An entire continent awaits a committed, efficacious, prophetic



and paradigmatic Christian witness. But to meet this challenge the entire Christian church, and not the least Protestantism and its Main-line sector, will have to experience a New Pentecost.

Like fireworks lighting up the night  
the Holy Spirit came:  
dejected Christians felt the touch  
of living fronds of flame  
and suddenly the world was young  
and nothing looked the same

for Jesus' nearness gave them heart  
to venture, come what would:  
the love of Jesus bade them share  
their house, possessions, food:  
the mind of Jesus gave them speech  
that all men understood.

This is the Spirit who, today  
new daring will inspire  
and common folk are given gifts  
to change the world entire:  
the sparks which flew at Pentecost  
started a forest fire.<sup>31</sup>

31. Fraser, *Fire*, p. i.

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